

# College

# Composition and Communication

THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE CONFERENCE ON  
COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

EDITOR

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# New Approaches to Reading<sup>1</sup>

LEE C. DEIGHTON<sup>2</sup>

Last December the afternoon newspapers of New York City presented to a horrified citizenry the appalling statement that something like 54% of the city's ninth-grade students are not reading at ninth-grade level of achievement. A bit less stridently the *New York Times* on the following morning pointed out that these colorful test scores were in part the result of the way tests are constructed and statistical terms defined. Thus the ninth-grade norm by definition is that level of ability below which half of the country's ninth-grade students are known to fall.

This statistical discoloration, of course, puts the achievement of our high-school students in a needlessly lurid light. But there are questions to be raised. If half the students at any grade level are reading below the norm for that grade, how far below are they? What happens to them when they are given reading materials at their grade level of difficulty? At what point do they meet frustration? What happens to anyone who is required to read for any extended period of time in frustrating materials?

You have seen some of the widely quoted claims that present-day youngsters are reading more efficiently than their parents did 25 years ago. You have not seen other studies which show the parents in a somewhat better light, but these studies do nonetheless exist. It is my belief that we should be neither disheartened nor encouraged by reports of this kind, for there is reason to believe that comprehension, which is the essence of reading skill, does not really yield to statistical analysis. Please do not misunderstand. I am not attacking the valid-

ity of reading tests. They are the best means we have at the moment of measuring the reading ability of large numbers of people in a reasonable length of time.

But irrespective of published reports, favorable or unfavorable, it is common experience at every grade level of our educational system to find students having trouble in reading assigned materials. This has always been the case, and in all likelihood, it will always be the case. Communication of any content more significant than that found in comic strips is a subtle and complicated business at best. The problem is to discover what we can do to make both ends of the communication process more efficient.

In the year since this conference last met, the reading experts of the nation have been busy defending their methods and their rationale. On the whole, their defense may be judged successful, yet a careful reading of their published statements shows a disquieting note. When the experts refer to the research in their field, they do so with a notable lack of conviction.

Read the reports of this research and you will see why. Does the study of phonics make better readers? Research findings point both ways. Does reading in differing content areas call into play differing skills? The research points in both directions. Does the child entering the elementary school have an oral recognition vocabulary of 2500 words or of 6000 words? You can find studies that give both answers.

From evidence of this sort, the conclusion might easily be drawn that a new program of rigorous basic research is needed. And in fact some of the reading experts do plead for better controls, for larger samples, for more careful analy-

<sup>1</sup> Speech at the annual luncheon, Hotel Statler, New York, 24 March 1956

<sup>2</sup> Science Research Associates, Chicago and New York

sis of variable factors. No doubt better research and new research are wanted, but perhaps before that research gets under way, it would be wise to give more thought to the nature of reading and to the structure and operation of the language being read. What is wanted at this time is a sharper definition of what reading is and a clearer understanding of what it involves.

There are two aspects of reading to which the members of this conference are uniquely equipped to bring clarification and enlightenment. The first is the area of language operation; the second is the area of language structure.

We shall find a hint of what is needed in the reports of reading programs that appear in a steady flow in our education journals. It has become almost a fixed pattern in these reports to assert that the students involved have been improved to the point where they now read at such and such speed with 80 or 90% comprehension. Since these statements seldom describe what kind of material is read, we are unable to judge whether the speed is appropriate.

But more to our present point, these statements imply that comprehension is a unitary thing, measurable in percentages. It is my belief that this view of comprehension is both erroneous and dangerous.

By general consent in the reading field, comprehension is taken to mean perception of meaning. Beyond this broad characterization, there is little agreement among reading experts as to what comprehension covers. This is a fundamental uncertainty, a crippling uncertainty, which will hinder progress in reading instruction until it is removed.

To deal with this obstacle we may profitably turn to a study of how our language operates—what kinds of meanings it transmits and how it transmits them. The following analysis is neither new nor original, and I am quite sure it is not

complete. But its application to the teaching of reading has been too long delayed. And if it seems sensible, it can lead us to a satisfactory working definition of reading comprehension.

Perhaps we can agree that at the lowest level, comprehension has to do with the simple sense of the passage. Exactly what did the writer say? Did he say a million or a hundred million? Reading at this level is a matter of "yes or no," "true or false."

At a step higher, we are concerned with the author's generalizations. What does he conclude from the evidence presented? What are his big ideas?

There is a curious tradition in reading circles that readers should seek out the *main idea* of a passage. The longer a passage is, the more hazardous this undertaking becomes. It is the nature of terms and propositions that the more content they cover, the less content they hold. There is a great deal of good writing in which a number of equally important ideas are presented. A general statement which embraces all of them must necessarily be limited to what they have in common. An exercise in finding the main idea of a passage which contains several ideas must inevitably lead to neglect or misunderstanding of important differences.

The data and concepts in a passage are held together by the writer's organization. This organization is therefore a third significant aspect of meaning. Where is the writer going? What is he driving at? How has he arrived at a particular stage of his argument? In part the writer achieves organization by setting up relationships among his data and concepts. He ties them together by cause and effect, by time order, by space order, by showing likenesses and differences. These relationships are an important part, perhaps the adhesive part, of the writer's meaning. The perception of likenesses and differences is a basic act



of intelligence. We understand the unfamiliar only in terms of the familiar. It is one function of metaphor, of analogy, of contrast and comparison to describe the new in terms of the old. Perception of these devices and understanding of their function are surely involved in getting the meanings of a passage.

There is another level of meaning which the reader gets by interpretation—by his own organization of the material presented. He must consider, for example, not only what is said but what is left unsaid. Meaning is not only stated outright; it is also suggested. The reader interprets the writer's purpose and his tone. He figures out the writer's attitude toward his readers, toward himself and toward what he is saying. He gets this kind of meaning more from *how* a thing is said than from *what* is said. And if he ignores the manner, tone, and purpose of the writer, he is in danger of being victimized by rhetoric. Any serious discourse may have a rhetorical meaning as well as a logical and a metaphorical meaning. All three are parts of what the writer is saying to the reader. Each requires a different kind of evaluation. The reader may ask not only "What is the writer's evidence?" but also "How good is this evidence?" and "Does it warrant the writer's conclusions?" Or if the writer is expressing judgments, "Who is this writer? How does he know? Why does he say what he does?"

These questions are evaluative. They lead to understanding in depth of the printed word. They are in short the means by which evaluation becomes a stage in comprehension. Meaning is a many-faceted thing. Or to put it another way, any written passage may contain a variety of meanings stated and implied. These meanings are conveyed by suggestion, by organization, by structured relationships of data and concepts, by metaphor and analogy. The reader who seeks to comprehend must be sensitive

to all of these varieties of meaning and to the devices by which they are transmitted. Comprehension, in short, is not unitary but diverse and multi-phased.

Verbal communication is at best an uncertain means of conveying feelings, facts, and ideas. Let us remember that meaning derives from experience. The meanings that a word has for me are different from the meanings it has for you because our experiences are different. The possibility of any one person ever getting the whole of another person's meaning is slight indeed. For this reason, it is not meaningful to say that anyone reads with 80 or 90% comprehension. All that may be said is that at a given time a reader was able to answer a number of questions which a particular examiner felt to be pertinent to a particular reading selection.

For this analysis, there is no scientific proof. It is my belief that we are not here in an area where proof is appropriate. We are in an area of definition, and definitions are not subject to proof.

I am sure that many of you have already traveled far down the road that I have been pointing out. If you have, I am sure you have been asked, "Where does reading stop and reflection begin?" I believe this is a false question. It can be dealt with by another act of definition. I would suggest that we define reading to embrace reflection. We would say, then, that reading and reflection are inseparable, and that comprehension can be attained only by thinking.

Now for the matter of language structure. One seeks in vain in the research in reading for any of the elements of linguistic analysis. To anyone familiar with these two fields, the omission is almost incredible.

The linguists among us are concerned, in part at least, with identifying these formal elements of language which signal meaning. The application of this in-

formation to reading instruction seems almost self-evident.

At this conference you have attended movies, lectures, and panels showing how linguistic analysis may be used in the interpretation of poetry. I wonder how many of you considered that these were demonstrations of the uses of linguistics in reading—reading at a sophisticated level—but nonetheless reading. Will those of you who are authors forgive me for noticing at this time that beautiful and eloquent little book by Dr. Harold Whitehall, *The Structural Essentials of English*? I do so because I believe it contains information of critical importance in the teaching of reading.

The first service of linguistics to reading is to sweep away the false notions of the structure of English which have become almost superstitions. May I give you examples?

Essentially the first problem in reading is to persuade the child that the spoken words to which he normally responds correctly can be portrayed by printed symbols. The child enters school with an oral recognition vocabulary of unknown extent. The first goal in reading is to help the child recognize and identify this vocabulary when he sees it in print. It is for this purpose that phonics are introduced in reading instruction.

As part of this phonic instruction, it has become a firmly established principle that when "two vowels appear together in a word, usually the first has a long sound and the second is silent."

It is also firmly established as a principle of instruction that the ability to divide a word into syllables will aid the child in pronouncing an unfamiliar word. To instruct this ability, the children are informed "that a single vowel at the beginning or in the middle of a word or syllable is short." He is also informed that "if there are two consonant letters between two vowels in a word, the first

syllable usually ends with the first of the two consonants."

As to syllabification, *The New World Dictionary* states with candor: "Neither the system of division used in this dictionary nor any other yet devised really squares with the observable facts of the English language. The separation of syllables in this and similar books is merely a graphic convenience intended to help printers to be consistent . . . Meantime, we continue to use and unfortunately to have represented to us as factual, a system which is neither logical in itself nor based in any degree on the ascertained characteristics of our language."

As to what happens to two adjacent vowels, we may consider a list of 769 easy words compiled by Professor Dale<sup>1</sup> for use in predicting readability. Despite the limitations of any such list, this one is a useful instrument. The words listed are in all probability among the most common and the easiest confronted by young readers.

Analysis of this list discloses 154 in which there are adjacent vowels. In 102 or 61% of these words, the first vowel is not given a long sound, nor is the second vowel silent. As to single vowels appearing at the beginning or in the middle of words, they may be considered short only by abandoning the sounds in English that linguists identify with the schwa.

The first service of modern linguistics to the study of reading, then, is to clear away superstitions. A second service is to give a true picture of how the language operates.

It is difficult for anyone not thoroughly versed in the linguistic patterns of English to offer a blueprint of what can be done. I have three suggestions, and others will occur to you.

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Dale. The list appears in Irving Lorge, "Predicting Reading Difficulty of Selections for Children," *Elementary English Review*, XVI (October, 1939), 229-233, and "Predicting Readability," *Teachers College Record*, XL (March, 1944), 404-419.

The first concerns word-groups. Meaning in English is not usually conveyed by single words but by words acting in groups. The reader's problem is to discover in a sentence which words go with which. This is not a matter of chance but a matter of the innate structure of the language. Meaning cannot be conveyed in English except through the channels of this structure. The linguist can tell us the shape of these word groups and the positions in which they are found. He can describe their constituents, their configuration, and the structural signals which identify them. Does it not seem likely that an inexperienced reader, made acquainted with these basic patterns within the English sentence will be able to cope more efficiently?

A second example of what may be done pertains to intonation patterns. It is a common experience in secondary schools to find that as soon as students leave off reading text materials that are written in the straight-forward colloquial style of speech, they encounter difficulty. The structures of formal written Eng-

lish are more complex than the structures of spoken language. This is a matter of common experience. We do not often begin a spoken sentence with a long introductory participial phrase. There are few occasions upon which we use the construction *upon which* in speech. I should like to present as a hypothesis the possibility that the more complicated structure of formal writing produces problems in intonation for the inexperienced reader. Here again, the linguist can advise and suggest teaching procedures.

One last example of what may be done. It would be instructive to have a linguist's critique of the sentences which appear in the books from which primary-school children read. These pages are filled with expressions such as these: *Look, John, look. See, Jane, see. Run, Dick, run.* This is not the way people speak. They do not end an imperative on a rising inflection. They do not say, "Run, Dick, run." They are more likely to say, "Let's get out of here."

And on this suggestive note, I close.

## Closed-Circuit TV at New York University<sup>1</sup>

JOHN H. HOAGLAND<sup>2</sup>

A demonstration of teaching college composition by closed circuit television was viewed by approximately 150 college and secondary-school teachers of English during the second general session of the annual spring meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. The session was held in the Waverly Place Building of New York University between 4:15 and 6 p.m. on Friday, March 23, 1956.

Dr. Thomas Clark Pollock, Dean of the Washington Square College of Arts

and Sciences of New York University, who presided at the session, was assisted by Dr. Oscar Cargill, Chairman of the Department of English at the college. The lesson on "The Apology of Socrates" was presented by Mrs. Ruth Middlebrook, associate professor of English, assisted by Mr. Boris Gamzue and Mr. William Buckler, assistant professors of English.

The audience viewed the lesson on 24-inch television receivers placed in three classrooms and a "faculty viewing room." These rooms and four others in the same building are connected by coaxial cable with a television studio on the second

<sup>1</sup> Recorder's report of the Second General Session, Part 2, Washington Square College, New York University, 23 March 1956

<sup>2</sup> North Plainfield High School, New Jersey

floor of the South Building, two blocks away.

As the program began, viewers saw on the screen Dr. Pollock and Dr. Cargill seated in comfortable chairs with a small table between them as though in a living room. It was their purpose to explain the program of teaching by television, at present in an experimental stage in the N.Y.U. Washington Square College of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Pollock compared the coming of television to the invention of movable type 500 years ago. He indicated that, like printing, television may prove to be a valuable tool in teaching, although its potentialities have yet to be fully explored. He also showed by quoting from works of the fifteenth century that there had been some at that time who deplored the coming of the printing press as the beginning of the end for true culture because the printer had no care for the permanency or beauty of his books as did the scribe.

Dr. Pollock added that we are now only at the very beginning of the use of television in education and that (1) it is something worth working with and (2) it may help solve the problem of the coming great influx of students in colleges and universities with the attendant shortage of skilled instructors.

The funds for the N.Y.U. experiment, Dr. Pollock explained, are being provided by the Fund for the Advancement of Education to cover necessary equipment and the salaries of one full-time engineer and three part-time professional television technicians.

This year two courses are being taught by television, "College Composition" and "The Literature of England." Students in the courses view two one-hour television lessons each week in groups of thirty to fifty simultaneously in the specially equipped classrooms and then meet for one hour each week in groups of fifteen (in composition) and twenty-five

(in literature), each with a "tutor" who leads the discussion of the material presented via television and grades the themes of those in the composition course.

Dr. Pollock revealed that 26 members of the English Department are involved in this year's series of lecture-demonstrations, with each voluntarily contributing to those lessons for which he feels best fitted by his interest and knowledge.

At this point Dr. Cargill introduced the "sample lesson" to the audience. He explained that this lesson on "The Apology of Socrates" had been presented in the composition course as the culminating lesson in a series on semantics. He announced that the lesson had been prepared by Mrs. Middlebrook and that she would be assisted by Mr. Gamzue, who would read the part of Socrates, and by Mr. Buckler, "materials coordinator" for the TV series, who would read the roles of three accusers of Socrates and then participate in a discussion of the "Apology" with Mrs. Middlebrook following the dramatic readings. Dr. Cargill pointed out that in the "Apology" Socrates was defending himself against the charges of impiety or heresy and corrupting the minds of the young.

Next on the screen appeared a "title card" giving the course number and title, the date, the subject, and the professors participating. This dissolved to a view of the agora of Athens as it may have appeared in the time of Socrates. This painted scenic backdrop was used throughout the readings to provide a setting for the lesson. The voice of Mrs. Middlebrook was heard as narrator, setting the time, place, and occasion and providing a narrative "bridge" between the speeches of Socrates and the jurors selected to drive home the point of the lesson, that Socrates was seeking only man's right to search for and to speak the truth.

Next appeared the head and shoulders



of Mr. Gamzue, in modern dress, as he read the words of Socrates reported by Plato. The only other face to appear on the screen was that of Mr. Buckler, who appeared briefly when Socrates refuted the charges of one of his accusers.

Two television cameras were used to provide quick changes from one reader to another or from the reader to the backdrop scene of Athens. Occasionally, however, one camera was moved slowly from the face of Socrates to the backdrop while he continued speaking.

At the close of the dramatic reading, the scene once more returned to the two easy chairs, in which were seated Mrs. Middlebrook and Mr. Buckler, who proceeded to carry on a conversational discussion of the meaning and thematic intent of the "Apology." Questions raised and answered included the following:

What is the central point for the student?

Did Socrates want to be saved?

Why did he make constant references to war in his choice of analogies?

Is the "Apology" a verbatim account of the trial or an artistic reconstruction by Plato?

What is the "Socratic method"?

At the end of the discussion Mrs. Middlebrook rose and stood before a blackboard on which had been sketched a schematic diagram of the court machinery of the Athens of Socrates' time. Here she pointed out those factors which influenced the method and outcome of Socrates' trial.

To signal the close of the lesson the title card which had opened it was shown again.

Dr. Pollock reappeared on the screen and announced that Dr. Cargill was on his way to the faculty viewing room to answer questions and that he would soon follow. Meanwhile, he added more information about the TV series. He stressed that the lesson just viewed was merely

an example of those in the series, chosen not because it was best or unusual but because it was typical. He added that no kinescopes had been made of the series, so that this had been a complete reenactment of the lesson as taught.

Concerning the use of television in this experiment, Dr. Pollock said, "Yes, we can help students learn; yes, we can help students learn as well as by other methods; and, probably, we can help students learn better."

By this time Dr. Cargill had reached the viewing room to add further facts about the series. By a questionnaire given to students it had been found that students in the literature course favored the television method of instruction by 2 to 1 and that students in the composition course voted about 125 to 90 in its favor.

In response to questions from the audience Dr. Cargill revealed further information: that it was felt the use of rooms seating 50 was more effective than an auditorium equipped with a large screen; that television enabled each member of a large audience to have almost personal eye contact with the instructor and to see demonstration materials more clearly than in an auditorium-with-lecturer situation; that about 14 hours of preparation go into each lesson; that about three times as much material can be presented in an hour of television as in a class period of the same length; and that the cost per student is high but decreases as the number of students viewing a particular lesson increases.

At this point Dr. Pollock arrived at the viewing room to answer further questions. He said that proposals had been made that the experiment be carried on in other departments and that plans for doing this were being considered. He added that television teaching could probably be done most easily in the sciences, but since experiments in that line were done by other institutions, N.Y.U.



had decided to start in other fields. His hope is that they will be able to use color television when they are ready to do a series in science.

To a query about the possibility of teaching the technical aspects of composition via television, Dr. Pollock replied that it can be done, "but," he added with a smile, "it takes more ingenuity than in the usual class."

The proportion of time devoted to television demonstration and to "tutorial" discussion is still the subject of experiment, according to Dr. Pollock, and since ideally the discussion by students should closely follow the lecture, the course next year will be taught in two periods of 1½ hours each to allow flexibility in experimenting with this time proportion.

When asked about eyestrain imposed by the hour-long television lessons, Dr. Pollock stated that they were still experimenting to find the ideal classroom illu-

mination. He added that so far only two complaints of eyestrain had been registered by students.

A point of disagreement among the members of the audience was whether the method used (reading in modern dress) was more effective than all-out dramatization with full costume and make-up, perhaps using faculty members or students with acting ability. Dr. Pollock said that the experiment was begun with a primary emphasis on maximum faculty involvement but that the door is open to using other types of lesson in future experiments with the medium.

One final comment from a member of the audience seems significant: "This type of teaching imposes a discipline on the teacher to be prepared."

At the close of the session members of the audience were invited to send further questions in writing to either Dr. Pollock or Dr. Cargill.

## Illinois vs. Illiteracy

HARRIS W. WILSON<sup>1</sup>

On December 20, 1955, the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois approved a recommendation of the University Senate that Rhetoric 100 be discontinued after the 1960 summer session. That "stern decision," as one newspaper called it, caused reverberations not only in this state and the Middlewest, but also throughout the country. I shall have something specific to say about these reactions later, but first we might consider the background of the decision and its implications.

What is this Rhetoric 100 which is causing so much comment? It is called by various names in various colleges—Remedial English, Zero English, and, by

many students, "Bonehead English." That name alone is perhaps good enough reason for dropping it. But whatever it is called, at Illinois it is a non-credit remedial course designed to enable the student to overcome serious deficiencies in English and at the same time avoid the penalty of a failing grade in the first college-level composition course, Rhetoric 101. Students are assigned either to Rhetoric 101 or to Rhetoric 100 at the beginning of the semester on the basis of a proficiency test consisting of two parts: one, a hundred-item objective examination testing vocabulary, spelling, grammar and sentence construction, and two, a composition written upon some familiar topic. These proficiency tests are judged by a committee of three rhetoric instruc-

<sup>1</sup> University of Illinois

tors, and a majority vote by the committee sends the student to Rhetoric 100 if the committee feels that the student cannot meet the minimum entrance requirements of Rhetoric 101. After three weeks, a committee examines all of the work done up to that point by each student in Rhetoric 100 and 101, and his final placement is determined. The purpose of this procedure is to make certain that our original classification was accurate and to transfer those students who might have been misclassified.

Now the percentage of entering freshman students assigned to Rhetoric 100 has been growing steadily in recent years. In 1930-31, of 2,841 entering freshmen, 222 students or 7.81% were sent to the remedial course, at that time called Rhetoric 0. In 1940-41, of 2,800 entering freshmen, 765 students or 23.7% were sent to Rhetoric 100. This year, 1955-56, of 3,247 entering freshmen, 954 students or 29.8% were sent to Rhetoric 100. In other words, in the last twenty-five years the percentage of students coming to the University poorly prepared in rhetoric has increased from 7.81% to 29.8%, from less than one out of ten students to nearly one out of three.

You might ask at this time why the university is eliminating a course so rapidly and steadily growing in population if not in popularity. There are several reasons. In the first place, it is purely a matter of economics. In instructional cost alone, the university, and therefore the taxpayers, is paying \$500 for each Rhetoric 100 class. Assuming a normal enrollment of 15 students in each class, the total cost for the year is about \$35,000, a figure that doesn't include the administrative and secretarial costs. Consequently, the university is spending between thirty-five and forty thousand dollars each year on a course that is not a college course at all.

But a far more important reason is that there is definite indication that Rhetoric

100 for the majority of students comes too late. I do not mean that there isn't improvement in the conscientious Rhetoric 100 student. There is real and sometimes startling improvement. But in most cases it is impossible to teach the student in four months what he should have learned in the previous twelve years. The sad fact is that studies show that four out of five of the students originally sent to Rhetoric 100 are out of the university on academic deficiencies by the end of their third semester. Consequently, for many students, Rhetoric 100 would seem merely to postpone an inevitable and tragic consequence.

These, then, are the principal reasons for eliminating Rhetoric 100. But I should like to emphasize that the elimination of the course was neither a hasty nor a unilateral action. The proposal came first in a report from the University Senate Committee on Student English on January 7, 1954. This Senate Committee is composed of representatives from various colleges on the campus, and is concerned with the problem of maintaining respectable standards in student English in all university courses. The Chairman of Freshman Rhetoric recommended to the Department of English that the course be dropped. The Department approved the recommendation. It was subsequently approved by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and then was submitted to the University Senate itself, a body composed of full professors from all branches of the university. The measure passed the Senate without a single dissenting vote. Finally, the recommendation was presented by Dr. Henry, the University President, to the Board of Trustees, where again it was passed unanimously. Consequently, the decision was made and approved by the university as a whole, not by the Rhetoric Staff alone, not by the English Department alone. And this is certainly as it should be. Although the English Department administers the

freshman rhetoric program, the course is of vital concern to the whole university since it provides the basic preparatory work in written expression for all freshman students of all colleges in the university.

It should be stressed also that the proposal was put into effect only with due consideration for the high schools in the state. The lapse of time between the announcement on December 20, 1955, and the inauguration of the new policy in September, 1960, will give all concerned ample opportunity to adjust to the change. A high-school freshman of 1956 can, in the four years that lie ahead, so apply himself to his English work that he will be ready to assume the role of college freshman in 1960.

As an aid to the high schools during this adjustment period, the Senate Committee on Student English and the Department of English, working in conjunction with representatives of the public schools of Illinois, published a pamphlet entitled *Standards in Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois*. The pamphlet spells out in detail exactly what the university expects of entering freshmen insofar as English is concerned. In addition to stating the specific requirements and objectives of the freshman rhetoric courses, it provides an example of the proficiency test in rhetoric given to all entering freshmen, and typical proficiency themes of A, B, C, D, and failing caliber. If this publication receives the dissemination and use we hope for it, the dropping of Rhetoric 100 in 1960 will cause little disturbance.

As a further service to the high schools, Professor Charles W. Roberts, Chairman of Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois, has sent to the principal of each high school in the state the rhetoric grades of its graduates who have attended the University of Illinois between 1933 and 1953 for the public high schools, and between 1933 and 1943 for the pri-

vate schools. These records enable each high school to have an over-all view of the performance in rhetoric of its graduates for the period indicated. Professor Roberts has also sent to each high school the placement test compositions written by its graduates who entered the university in September, 1955.

Now we realize that some of the best high-school graduates in some communities are drawn to other institutions than the state university, especially in Illinois, which provides so many fine alternatives. But we are convinced that the University's standards in English are close enough to those of other colleges in the state, or out of the state, for that matter, that these materials should benefit any college-bound student, no matter where he plans to go. Indeed, the standards set forth in the pamphlet I have spoken of establish a level of competence in English that one could reasonably expect of any high-school graduate, whether he intends to go to college or not.

To my knowledge, this combination of efforts to promote an increased articulation between high schools and college is unprecedented.

Let us proceed to a consideration of exactly what the elimination will mean, first in terms of the student, who is, of course, our chief concern. Every entering student at the University of Illinois will, in the fall of 1960, be enrolled in the Rhetoric 101 course. He will succeed or fail in terms of the regular college-level standards. He will take the proficiency test in English for diagnostic purposes, but it will have lost its old function as an admission test. There will be no remedial English. I shall not go into the computations here, but on the basis of our past experience the rate of failure will rise from a present 5% in Rhetoric 101 to 15% in the merged course, certainly not an excessive rate. One might accuse us of being inhumane in taking away a prop that does undoubtedly help

a few students. But in these times of increased enrollments and a scarcity of teachers, our time and energy of necessity must be saved for those qualified students who are our legitimate concern. And there are many of those. Our emphasis upon the unprepared 30% should not cloud the fact that over 70% of our students come to us with at least adequate, in many cases excellent, backgrounds in English.

Now what does the elimination of Rhetoric 100 mean to the elementary and high-school teachers of our state? We hope that it will mean that they will be able to work in a new atmosphere, in which administrators, teachers, parents, and students alike will realize that English must be given more time and attention and that reasonable standards of written expression must be attained before the student is certified as a high-school graduate and a qualified aspirant for a higher degree. This hope may seem somewhat exalted, and I agree that the mere dropping of Rhetoric 100 would scarcely accomplish so much. But this move by the University of Illinois has apparently given concrete expression to uneasy convictions we all have had that the easiest and most expedient way is not the best way, that intellectual competence comes not from a kind of passive osmosis but from hard and steady application. There has been widespread editorial comment in the newspapers throughout the country hailing the decision as one that has been long over-

due. Three Chicago metropolitan newspapers launched a series of feature articles examining not only the specific faults in the preparation of high-school students for college composition, but also the educational philosophies in secondary and elementary schools responsible for inadequate instruction in all subjects. And these press reactions are not mere sensationalism. They express a public awareness of something very much awry in the public schools and a desire to do something about it.

But even more heartening has been the response of administrators and teachers of the high schools in the state. In his letter in which he recommended to the English Department the dropping of Rhetoric 100, Professor Roberts wrote, "In my twenty-six years of work with Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois, I have not seen a more opportune time than the present to straighten out the lines of responsibility in English instruction in the entire public-school system. The good sense of public-school administrators and teachers is beginning to assert itself." This good sense has been amply demonstrated. The great majority of the comments we have received from high-school administrators and teachers have been positive and appreciative. The public-school people welcome the reassertion of standards in English by the state university as a reinforcement of their own desire to demand from their students a reasonable level of proficiency in written expression.

## The Sub-Freshman English Student in the Day Commerce Department of DePaul University, Chicago

FERDINAND J. WARD, C.M.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring semester of 1948 DePaul University introduced in its Day Com-

merce Department a sub-freshman English course. Since then every entering student, freshman or transfer, who failed to

<sup>1</sup> DePaul University



pass an English placement test has been required to take this course. The test is the *Cooperative English Test*, Mechanics of Expression, with a cut-off at the tenth percentile, and an essay.

The required courses in this Department are the usual two semesters of Freshman English, and one in Business Correspondence in the junior year.

To learn how many of these sub-freshmen English students completed their

work for a B.S. degree at DePaul, and what grades they achieved in the regular English courses, a survey was made of their work from 1947 through 1955.

The following table shows the number of both sub-freshmen and regular freshmen entering the Department, and the number obtaining their degrees. It also gives percentages of the Bachelors of Science.

TABLE I

Entered	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52
Took degree	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Total freshmen	646	534	475	315	303
Sub-freshmen	141	114	174	108	100
Regular freshmen to receive B.S.	136	111	125	108	105
Sub-freshmen to gain degree	31	25	22	11	12
Percentage of regular freshmen to finish	26.9	27	41.1	52.1	51.2
Percentage of sub-freshmen to finish	21.9	21.9	12.9	10.1	9

This table indicates that a rather high percentage of 1947-1949 sub-freshmen received degrees. These classes included many veterans of World War II, who were older and more serious than current students. The last three more nor-

mal freshman groups show 12.9, 10.1, and 9% of graduates. One may predict that the number of remedial English students finishing in the Commerce Department will average 10%.

TABLE II  
Grades in Required Courses Earned by Sub-Freshmen

	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52
English I (Freshman English)	A 3	A 2	A 3	A 3	A 1
	B 10	B 3	B 19	B 9	B 6
	C 34	C 28	C 31	C 22	C 22
	D 9	D 18	D 22	D 13	D 12
	F 10	F 5	F 18	F 6	F 4
English II (Freshman English)	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 0	A 0
	B 13	B 10	B 9	B 0	B 5
	C 23	C 16	C 21	C 18	C 7
	D 7	D 8	D 16	D 16	D 7
	F 2	F 5	F 14	F 7	F 7
English 113 (Business Correspondence)	A 0	A 1	A 0	A 1	A 0
	B 9	B 5	B 8	B 1	B 5
	C 20	C 15	C 15	C 7	C 7
	D 2	D 4	D 2	D 2	D 7
	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 7



From this table one may conclude that the former sub-freshman will do average work in his three required courses. The curve is normal. In general, these students achieve the same marks in English as they do in their other courses. Thus, if the sub-freshman remains in the required courses, he will do average work, especially in his junior year.

TABLE III — DROP-OUT

YEAR	Number dropping from college	Number dropped for poor work
1947	72	19
1948	43	15
1949	65	24
1950	65	18
1951	38	12

However, at the close of their first year in college, 50% of the group will withdraw for various reasons; 20% will depart by the end of the sophomore year, and of those entering the junior year only 15% will begin their senior work. The largest drop will occur in the first semester of regular English.

From this study of the remedial English student in the Commerce Department of DePaul two conclusions may be drawn. The first is that in the future only 10 to 12% will ever receive a degree, and the second is that those persevering in the required English courses will do average work. It would seem economically wiser to discontinue the remedial course, and to replace it with a five-hour course paralleling English I but stressing fundamentals and carrying only three hours of credit. The testing procedure would be unchanged, but low freshmen would be directed into the five-hour course.

## A Study of Teaching Conditions in Freshman Composition in 1954

GEORGE KELLY<sup>1</sup>

At the 1955 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Chicago, the workshop on administering the freshman course formed a committee to investigate the teaching conditions in freshman English for the year 1954. The committee, consisting of Richard Blakeslee, Eugene Grew, Albert R. Kitzhaber, James A. Walker, and George Kelly as chairman, conducted its work during the spring and summer of 1955 and prepared this report during the fall of 1955. At the November meeting of the Executive Committee of the CCCC in New York, Mr. Kelly reported on the work of this committee with two imme-

diates results: first, the Executive Committee suggested that this report be published in the *College Composition and Communication*, and second, they voted that a permanent source or bureau of statistics as this report contains be established by CCCC and that Mr. Kelly consult with Irwin Griggs on how best to accomplish this end.

In May, 1955, a survey form, consisting of the questions which constitute the headings of this report, was mailed to a sampling of six different types of institutions. The 150 forms were mailed in proportionate numbers to the six types of institutions, and 97 replies were received; of these 84 were usable in com-

<sup>1</sup>University of Maryland

piling the final statistics. Thus this report represents an analysis of 56% of the sampling.

A note will be needed on the terms used in this report.

*Freshman Composition I* is used here to mean any first-semester freshman course in which composition is taught, as a subject in itself, by means of literature, or along with the other communication skills.

*Kind* refers to the kind of institution according to the following classification: I state university, II private university, III public four-year college, IV private four-year college, V teachers college, VI junior college.

*Number* means the number of replies to the question asked.

*Range* means the difference between the greatest and least values among the

replies to a particular question. The actual lowest and highest figures are recorded.

*Mode* means the number or interval which occurred most frequently in any reply. It thus represents what is most frequently the case in a particular type of institution.

*Median* means that point in the range of replies where there was an equal number of replies above and below.

*Mean* means the arithmetic mean or what is commonly referred to as the average obtained by dividing the sum of the quantities in the replies by the number of replies. As the reader will be quick to observe, the mean is frequently a less significant figure in this report than the mode or the median and the variation between these three figures is generally one of significance.

1. a. What was the size of your entire freshman class in fall, 1954?

a	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Kind						
Number	18	14	13	10	15	14
Range	740-5821	350-1970	179-2704	100-751	110-1334	18-1900
Mode	1445-1915	602-774	515-655	100-250	439-590	196-275
Median	1800 <sup>a</sup>	761 <sup>a</sup>	786	412.5 <sup>a</sup>	439	222 <sup>a</sup>
Mean	2164	916	1117.3	389	472	366

b. What was the size of your new freshman class in fall, 1954?

b	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Kind						
Number	18	14	12	10	16	11
Range	675-3031	250-1600	167-2413	60-751	105-863	18-1200
Mode	1230-1339	430-585	480-644	364-500	450-540	80-120
Median	1337.5 <sup>a</sup>	698 <sup>a</sup>	697 <sup>a</sup>	376 <sup>a</sup>	403 <sup>a</sup>	195
Mean	1641	840	942	356	406	286

<sup>a</sup> Constructed from raw data

2. What is your total number of teachers teaching one or more sections of freshman composition (include "teaching fellows")?

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Kind						
Number	17	16	14	11	16	15
Range	21-81	6-36	5-46	2-22	2-22	1-30
Mode	31	10-12	9	2-4	68	4
Median	37	17.5 <sup>a</sup>	12 <sup>a</sup>	7	6.5 <sup>a</sup>	4
Mean	44	18.4	18.3	8.6	7.2	6

## 3. a. How many full-time instructors (include here professorial ranks) are there in your department?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	18	16	14	11	16	14
Range	3-72	5-37	5-49	0-28	0-25	0-27
Mode	30-32	11	13	7-8	4	2
Median	30 <sup>a</sup>	15.5	13	8	7.7 <sup>a</sup>	3
Mean	32	16.9	19.3	9.8	7.8	5.4

## b. How many of these instructors teach at least one section of freshman composition?

Number	18	15	14	11	16	12
Range	3-54	4-24	5-36	2-22	0-22	1-27
Mode	12-14	10	10-11	2-4	8	1
Median	21 <sup>a</sup>	11	11	7	7 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 <sup>a</sup>
Mean	24	11.9	15.7	8.2	7	5.3

## c. How many teach freshman composition as at least half their teaching load?

Number	18	14	14	11	16	12
Range	2-37	2-18	2-30	0-14	0-17	1-27
Mode	11	8	8	5-6	3	2
Median	13.5 <sup>a</sup>	8	8	5	3	2
Mean	15.6	8.6	12	4.7	4.8	4.6

## 4. What is the average teaching load of a full-time instructor who teaches freshman composition as at least half his teaching program?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	18	14	13	8	14	14
Range	9-12	12-15	12-15	9-17	12-15	12-16
Mode	12	12	12+15 <sup>c</sup>	12	15	15
Median	12	12	14	12	14.5 <sup>a</sup>	15
Mean	11.5	12.2	13.6	12.6	14.1	14.6

## c Bi-modal

## 5. a. How many freshman composition sections are usually assigned to a full-time instructor?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	16	15	15	10	15	14
Range	1-4	1-4	2-4	1-4	1-5	2-5
Mode	2	2+3 <sup>c</sup>	3	2	3	3
Median	2	3	3	2	3	3
Mean	2.3	2.6	3.1	2.3	2.6	3.3

## b. What was the maximum number of composition sections assigned to a full-time instructor in fall, 1954?

Number	16	15	14	10	16	14
Range	2-4	1-5	2-5	1-4	2-4	2-5
Mode	3	4	4	3	3	3
Median	3	3	4	3	3	3.5 <sup>a</sup>
Mean	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.8	3	3.7

6. What was the average number of students in a regular freshman composition I section during fall, 1954?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	18	16	14	10	14	15
Range	18-33	18-35	19-33	15-26	21-40	9-37
Mode	25	25	27-28	18-21	30-32	25
Median	24.5 <sup>a</sup>	25	25	20.5	28	25
Mean	24.6	26.8	25.5	20.6	28.1	25.1

7. a. What was the maximum number of freshman composition students under a single full-time instructor in fall, 1954?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	18	15	14	10	16	14
Range	24-141	25-130	33-130	15-101	25-120	18-156
Mode	80	60	68-70	60	25-35	80.83
Median	76 <sup>a</sup>	75	83 <sup>a</sup>	60	65 <sup>a</sup>	82.5 <sup>a</sup>
Mean	75.9	78.9	86.8	58.1	63.3	85.1

b. For how many teachers would the figure cited in (a) above be an approximately normal load?

Number	18	11	14	10	16	12
Range	1-32	1-25	1-23	1-9	1-8	0-12
Mode	1	1	2	1	1	0-2
Median	3	1	2	4	2.5 <sup>a</sup>	2
Mean	9.7	4	4.6	3.8	3.1	2.5

8. a. What was the average total number of words written in composition units required or suggested in composition I?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	16	14	12	9	11	12
Range	2700-9500	2000-10800	2000-10000	2400-8400	1550-7500	2400-10000
Mode	4500	6000	2500	4200-4800	4000	5000
Median	4700	5400	3250	4500	4000	4300 <sup>a</sup>
Mean	5381	5964	4066	4856	4814	4833

b. What was the average total number of different composition units written in composition I?

Number	16	15	12	10	15	12
Range	7-15	8-20	7-40	8-18	6-23	5-12
Mode	9-11	10	9-12	12	12	12
Median	12	11	11.5 <sup>a</sup>	12	10	10
Mean	11.9	11.7	13.6	12.3	11.3	9.4

9. What would you estimate to be the total number of student themes (composition units of all sizes) that your instructors with "a normal load" read in the fall semester, 1954?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	14	13	10	10	10	11
Range	300-1500	200-1100	500-3000	180-1200	400-1600	70-1400
Mode	450-540	600-700	704-780	352-451	700-750	600
Median	739.5 <sup>a</sup>	700	762 <sup>a</sup>	400	710	600
Mean	813	690	1072.2	504.3	779.5	734

10. How many conferences is the freshman composition instructor expected to hold with each student during the fall semester?

Kind	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number	15	12	10	5	10	10
Range	1-10	1-3	1-10	1-8	0-11	0-3
Mode	2	2+3	1+2	1	2-4	2-3
Median	2	2.3	2.5	2	3.5	2
Mean	3.6	2	3.5	3	4.4	1.4

# NSSC News

JEAN MALMSTROM<sup>1</sup>

At the annual business meeting of NSSC in Los Angeles last December Kenneth H. Harwood, Head, Department of Telecommunications, USC, was elected president for 1956. Thomas R. Lewis, Department of Speech, Florida State University, and John Keltner, Department of Speech, Kansas State College, were elected first and second vice-presidents respectively. C. Merton Babcock, Associate Professor of Communication Skills, MSU, was elected to a three-year term as editor of the *Journal of Communication*. Lt. John B. Haney, Communication Skills Instructor, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, is the new business manager for the *Journal of Communication*. New members-at-large of the National Council of NSSC are Earnest Brandenburg, Dean, University College, Washington University, and Jean Malmstrom, Department of English, Western Michigan College.

The 1956 summer conference of NSSC will be held at Aspen, Colorado, August 23-25.

The February, 1956, NSSC Newsletter carries a list of communication materials with sources from which these materials are available. The list is issued as a service of the newly activated Information Distribution Center, under the direction of Granville Basye, Abraham Lincoln High School, San Jose, California. One function of the Information Distribution Center is to make known to NSSC members communication materials which are not readily available through usual publication channels. The materials in the list are grouped according to these areas: business and industry, general, govern-

ment, colleges and universities, elementary school, intercultural communication, and listening comprehension. Additional lists will be published later.

NSSC sponsored a meeting on "Communication in Business and Industry" at the annual convention of the Southern States Speech Association at Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on April 6. Thomas R. Lewis arranged this first NSSC-sponsored meeting at a Southern Association convention.

At the December, 1955, business meeting, when Herold Lillywhite presented the report of the Committee on Responsibility in Communication, the group supported Ralph Nichols' motion that the second vice-president vigorously push Option 4 of the report through the proper study and research committee. Option 4 read as follows: "The committee collected evidence to indicate that school and college teachers of communication subjects have generally been remiss in the past, in not teaching, directly and vigorously, an understanding of what is meant by 'responsibility in communication.' It would seem reasonable that the NSSC should endeavor, by every means possible, to change this situation."

At the same meeting NSSC decided not to sponsor an "interest group" of the Speech Association of America at this time. Instead NSSC will be kept an independent organization and continue as in the past in the preparation of the annual program with SAA.

With this issue of *College Composition and Communication* Jean Malmstrom retires by resignation as liaison person between CCCC and NSSC. She wishes to thank anyone who has patiently or impatiently read anything she has written in this department during the past two years.

<sup>1</sup> Western Michigan College



# Attracting English Majors at Indiana University<sup>1</sup>

PHILIP R. WIKELUND<sup>2</sup>

Three years ago the Department of English at Indiana University looked at the record of its majors: it seemed that for a department as large as ours far too few of our majors achieved the usual distinctions—scholarships and prizes, election to Phi Beta Kappa, honors at graduation.

Any academic person will know what we did. We set up a committee. This committee bore a title, not elegant but certainly descriptive: Department of English Committee for the Improvement of the Quality of the English Major. Its function was to consider ways by which we might attract students of high calibre and unusual promise into the field of English studies, as many as possible of course, but we were not primarily concerned with numbers.

Unlike most other faculty committees I have served on, this committee happily produced more than the traditional report which quickly finds its way to the bottom drawer. After about six months and two hundred cups of coffee, it could point to two substantial achievements: a new honors program adopted and put into effect the following year, a program which in fact served as a model for revived honors programs in other departments, and a brochure entitled "Career Opportunities for Majors in English." Subsequently, the department introduced a number of other measures and projects as part of its general plan for improving the quality of our majors. That general plan I shall attempt to describe.

Now obviously most of us feel that among vocations teaching is one of the best, perhaps *the* best; and I am sure that

we have always encouraged those young people who seemed suited and interested to enter it. But when we face the infinite variety of human interests and the multitudinous needs of our contemporary society, we have to recognize that few of our students will wish to teach. Anyone who has advised students knows well the little conversation piece: "I like English very much, but what can I do with it after graduation, except teach?" Many of us have answered this student with praise for the value of a liberal education, though feeling we had no right to press home our views when we could not really show how the training afforded by a literary discipline did lead to careers other than teaching. Of course we knew that in many a profession—and law will serve as the pre-eminent example—our discipline has precise, palpable, and telling influence. But beyond this, we lacked the facts. It was this problem—the lack of a clear and convincing demonstration of the vocational value of the English major—which our department, through its committee, tackled as its first task. We decided to get the facts and state them. This we did in the brochure I previously referred to.

We were favored in our undertaking by one circumstance: the recently awakened and rapidly growing interest of American industry and business in college graduates of broader education and less specialization. We could point effectively to the strong stand in favor of liberal arts training taken publicly at the College English Association Institutes held successively at Amherst, Corning, East Lansing, and Schenectady, by top executives in the nation's great corporations and financial houses. We could honestly say to the student in the first paragraph of the brochure:

<sup>1</sup> A revision of a paper presented in Panel 3, Spring meeting, Hotel Morrison, Chicago, March 26, 1955

<sup>2</sup> Indiana University

A college major in English literature is good for its own sake because it is a good kind of education. It is also good because in these uncertain times it provides sound preparation and broad security for employment in an ever-expanding variety of vocations and professions. For in addition to career opportunities for English majors in fields traditionally associated with the study of English, a recent trend shows that realistic and forward-looking employers are increasingly offering opportunities in business and elsewhere to young people who have had the advantages of a broad liberal education.

We could quote to him such statements as that by the Divisional Manager of the American Management Association:

American business management is becoming more and more aware of the value for executives of a broad education in the humanities . . . Today's executive must have qualities of imagination to keep pace with the dynamic forces from many directions impinging on the business world: he must have a sense of the moral responsibility which American industrial power incurs. It is no more than prudent to prepare him for such demands by including in his education the greatest examples we have of the operation of the disciplined imagination, and the actual embodiment of moral values, in the works of the poets, philosopher, and artists.

The strongest point in our brochure, however, was its practical approach. First we consulted everyone on our campus who worked directly with job placement. Then we consulted the deans and advisors of the various schools and tied jobs to curricula. The brochure embodies the results. Section by section, it describes briefly careers in business—secretarial work, advertising, sales promotion, executive leadership; then careers in civil service, in law, in the ministry, in high-school and college teaching, in librarianship, in professional writing, and in book publishing. For each career the special value gained from a study of English is spelled out.

But most important of all, it lays out for many of the careers, actual sample programs, course by course, year by

year, through the four years of undergraduate study. The student can see for himself that the School of Law, say, or the School of Business approves the principle of the English major, and he can see already planned for him a program which meets his professional needs.

Our brochure was of course merely a gambit. The next move was to give it wide circulation. In its first form several hundred copies were mimeographed; some months later the first printed edition of five thousand copies was made available. (The second edition, printed this year, ran to seven thousand.) We distributed these to every member of our own department, to all the deans and academic advisors, to the various counselling services, in fact, to every agency and office in the university which we felt might bring our invitation to the attention of first- and second-year students. Reference to it is made even in the official university catalog. We mailed copies to high-school principals, counsellors, and heads of departments of English throughout the state for their own and their students' information. About two thousand copies were distributed as a supplement to *The CEA Critic* by the College English Association. Mail requests for copies are now a daily affair. Its most immediate use, though, was naturally in our own department—which takes me into the next step of our program: the recruiting and advising of majors.

As soon as the brochure was available, a departmental meeting was held and suggestions were made for recruiting promising majors. We invited our best students in the freshman and sophomore courses we taught to drop into our offices for a friendly talk; we got on the subject of their plans for a career, and—if they seemed likely to be interested—discussed the English major, gave them a copy of "Career Opportunities," suggested they read it over and come back

if they wished to talk the matter over further. Whenever a student discovered a strong interest, he was given expert advising, tentative programs were laid out for him, and he was encouraged to keep in touch with the department. If he became an English major he received careful advising throughout his undergraduate years.

But we have not stopped there. We feel that our invitation to acquire professional training through the English major carries responsibilities to the student when he seeks employment. So we have set up our own card index of our students covering their job qualifications. We urge our students to register with the three employment bureaus established by the University—the Bureau of Educational Placement, in the School of Education; the Institute of Training for Public Service, in the Department of Government; and the Bureau of Personnel Relations and Placement, in the School of Business; and through the latter we receive a weekly bulletin of job openings. Interestingly, these bureaus are not strictly limited to their obvious fields, and they frequently have openings of unusual opportunity. In order to secure the greatest benefits from this information, our majors are instructed to keep closely in touch with their advisors, who are ready to assist them in considering these openings and making proper application for them.

Possibly the most significant part of our whole program, however, has been our third, more complex move: to make the study of English more attractive, more challenging, more rewarding, and, frankly, to bring favorable attention to the Department of English, its faculty, and its work. I can give only a general indication of our program at this point. First, extensive curricular changes were introduced. To strengthen and enrich it, the major was diversified to include any one of five fields of concentration: Eng-

lish Literature, American Literature, Writing, Folklore, and English Language. Then the requirements for the major were revised, new cross-departmental combinations were worked out, and new courses in our own department were set up. Students were encouraged, for instance, to meet part of their concentration requirements in the major by taking such courses as—I quote their titles—"Classics and English Literature," "Studies in Comparative Literature," and "Philosophy in Literature;" or to fulfill the broader requirements of the so-called "concentration group" by work in fine arts or music, in other languages—French, German, Greek, Latin, Russian, Spanish—in comparative literature, history, philosophy, psychology, speech and theatre, journalism, writing, and library science. In our own department two courses required for the major may illustrate our innovations: one a rapid-reading course in Shakespeare (12 plays or so), and the other an intensive two-semester survey course, "Study of English Literature and Thought," covering the period from 1557 to 1890, and taken in the senior year. To attract two groups of excellent but already profession-bound students, the department also refurbished its six-year combined programs in law and medicine (A.B.-LL.B. and A.B.-M.D.).

To my mind the most interesting curricular changes were made at the bottom and top of our departmental offerings. As Richard L. Greene said in his address to the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English at Los Angeles two years ago, when considering this same problem of enhancing the English major,

The greatest opportunity to attract more students, and better students, to English as a major subject is found in those courses which precede commitment to a major . . . the first course in composition and the first course in literature should be the central and constant concern of the department . . . They are the show windows of the shop, the

lobby of the hotel, the reception room of the clinic . . . the first courses [are] the place where the best that the department has to offer should be laid before the student, including the best in personal relationships.

With this strongly but not solely in mind, our department has set up in the last three years special programs for superior students in both freshman composition and freshman literature, the latter "a study of literary masterpieces from Homer to the present." In content and procedure these are markedly different from the regular courses. In freshman literature, for example, the work is conducted in evening seminars. In both the composition and literature special programs, moreover, we have put our most attractive and seasoned faculty in charge.

At the top of our curriculum we have established a new honors program for which the committee's original proposal carried the pronouncement: "An honors program is a necessary part of a plan to attract superior students to the department." This honors program is open to all qualified majors regardless of their vocational objectives. It is a tutorial program of study, based on independent reading and investigation, focused through weekly conferences with the student's director and the writing of critical papers—sometimes a single honors thesis—and culminating in a comprehensive written and oral examination. Completion of the honors program with distinction confers special honors at graduation.

Finally, our department has tried in several ways to acquaint the university community with its faculty, and their interests and tastes in a broader perspective than the classroom allows. On Tuesday afternoons members of our department give forty-five minute "Readings from Literature" in the main lounge of our student union. Three years ago a series of evening lectures was instituted: the first series, "English Men of Letters

in the Eighteenth Century," dealt with five significant figures of the period; in the second, various facets of Shakespeare's art were examined; the third is devoted to "American Men of Letters." Our department has also pioneered in presenting courses on television, and one very talented member of our staff has produced several television programs devoted to the reading and interpretation of poetry.

What are the results of this general plan? Actually it is still too early to know. Our superior composition program is in its second year, our superior literature program in its third. There has not been time for our new majors to win distinctions. We have had, indeed, a remarkable rise in the number of our majors; in 1952-53 there were 73; in 1953-54, 94, a gain of 29% over 1952-53; in 1954-55, 113, a gain of 55% over 1952-53; and this year 125, a gain of 71% over 1952-53. But here I am not concerned with quantitative measures, and regarding the number of superior students who are now English majors and their quality I can offer at this time only an impressionistic report. I myself have talked with several students in our superior program in composition who have become English majors after one semester in this program; colleague after colleague has reported one or more students of great promise in his freshman or sophomore courses who have announced an intention to work in English; and from the freshman literature seminars there has been an early gratifying harvest. It will be several years of course before we can really assess the improvement of the English major which we undertook three and a half years ago. We are hopeful, however, that we are moving in the right direction. We are trying to discover the student interested in and fitted for the study of English and win him to our discipline; we are trying to make his choice—if he chooses us—a humanly



rich and rewarding experience; we are trying to show him that he need not compromise himself in his future professional career by centering his work in our department; and we are trying to make

every effort to assist him, at the completion of his work, to secure a post in his professional field. How much we succeed will be a measure of our powers against our visions.

## Recruiting English Majors at the State University of Iowa<sup>1</sup>

HARRY H. CROSBY

As a full-time member of the Communication Skills staff, I have no part in the English Department of the State University of Iowa. I agreed, however, to make a study of how the English Department encourages students to major in English, thinking that since I was not one of the recruiters, I could maintain some degree of objectivity.

My original plan was to canvass the 50 members of the English staff and ask about their recruiting policy, but I soon realized that I was wasting my time. The first man said, "I am afraid that we do nothing," and his answer was reiterated by all whom I asked. Instead of recruiting, the department is deliberately excluding students, especially those who earn C's with difficulty. Every other department in Liberal Arts requires one year of foreign language; last year, admittedly as a barrier to poorer students, the English Department increased its language requirements to two years. Almost as a matter of policy, the English Department does nothing to encourage students to major in English.

In some consternation since it appeared that I would have nothing to put in a report, I set to work to see what the results of this negativistic policy have been. To my surprise, the results have been remarkably good.

In the state of Iowa, the idea of majoring in English does not come naturally. There are few high-school students who plan to major in English. There is no demand at high-school "Career Days" for English professors. Although 210 trips were made last year by professors of medicine, engineering, commerce, nursing, journalism, and other departments, there was not a single request last year for an English professor. Last year the University asked 4,064 high-school students what they hoped to major in at college. Only one half of one per cent indicated they would major in English. Nine times as many wanted to be doctors; sixteen times as many wanted to major in commerce; thirty-three times as many wanted engineering; seven times as many wanted journalism. Home economics and sociology, to name only a few, were in greater demand than English.

In spite of this early apathy, the situation after the students come to the University is different. At the present time, the English Department has 107 students who list English as their major. Compare this to the Department of History, which has 44. Speaking of juniors and seniors alone, since those are the only figures available from some departments, the Art Department lists 37; pre-Commerce, 47; elementary education, 55; home economics, 54; psychology, 38; sociology, 39. The English Department has 70. Only

<sup>1</sup> A revision of a paper presented in Panel 7, Spring Meeting, Hotel Morrison, Chicago, March 26, 1955



the School of Journalism and the program for pre-medics have more majors than the Department of English.

At graduation, the picture is equally favorable. In the past four years, the English Department has granted more degrees than any other department in the College of Liberal Arts. Its undergraduate degrees outnumber every department in the entire university except the Department of General Business in the College of Commerce.

In addition to getting many students, the English Department seems to get good students. A study was made recently by the Registrar of the first-semester grade points of the majors of various departments. Of the thirty-seven departments, students majoring in English had the eighth highest grade point. Another study compared the composite entrance scores of students in the classes of various departments. The students of the departments of Philosophy, Physics, and English had the highest scores.

In spite of its cavalier dismissal of recruiting, the English Department, with its large numbers of high-quality students, has an enviable record for encouraging students to become English majors.

Since the English professors had proved to be such dismal sources of information, I turned to their students to see why they became English majors.

Hoping to get some representative opinions, I resolved to phone 25 of the University's English majors, which would be one-fourth of the total.

I would like to add parenthetically that phoning twenty-five students at the University of Iowa is no small job. For every one English major who was in his room, there were 2.51 English majors who were not. Three of the girls lived in the same sorority. When the first was not at home, I asked the pledge who answered the phone for the second. Since the second

was also absent, I asked for the third. As the third girl was coming to the phone, I heard the pledge whisper, "Don't go out with this guy. He is not particular."

Nevertheless, I think I arrived at some rather interesting information. On the basis of my conversations, I feel that I can explain at least in part the comparative success of the Iowa recruiting program.

I am afraid I will not be profound in my first observation. One reason Iowa's English Department has so many majors is that it has good subject matter and creditable teachers. Twenty-two of my twenty-five students came into English because they like it. Students go into commerce because they want to make money. They go into political science because they want to become lawyers which they want to become because they want to go into politics. They want to become doctors because their fathers did so well at it. To have students go into something because they like it is indeed refreshing. Nineteen of my consultants mentioned that they had been strongly influenced by their instructors in class. Since good literature and good teachers are not unique to Iowa, I will not linger long on this point except to conclude that as long as English Departments continue with their present high-quality subject matter and continue to do excellent jobs of classroom teaching, there will be a large number of English majors. Without these qualities, any forms of recruiting will be useless.

Perhaps the second reason for Iowa's success is unique to Iowa. At some schools, there are no introductory courses of general interest. A student has to take either a specialized course in Milton, Shakespeare, or Spenser, or he has to take a broad survey of a century of literature. In either case, the classes often get bogged down in literature that is admittedly bad, whose only excuse for

study is its historical value. At Iowa, nearly every student must take a one-year core course in literature. It is in the literature core courses that the English Department is doing most of its unintentional recruiting. Twelve of the students with whom I talked made up their minds to major in English after they came to SUI. Of these twelve, eight decided to major in English as a result of pleasant experiences in the core courses. Since the core courses are apparently effective instruments in encouraging students to become English majors, I will conclude my report by describing them.

Every student must take two one-semester courses. The classes are small, usually under twenty-five students. They are taught by nearly every member of the department, full professors and graduate students alike. Since the department offers three courses, the student has some choice. There are, I am pleased to report, rather lengthy writing requirements. One course is called "Greeks and the Bible;" the second, "English and American Authors;" and the third, "Modern Literature."

In "Greeks and the Bible," students read all or parts of Genesis, Exodus, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, Psalms, Amos, Job, Ecclesiastes, and St. Luke. They read several Greek plays by

Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Euripedes, and several dialogues of Plato.

In "English and American Authors," the classes read the *Canterbury Tales* in the original language, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV, Part I*, and several other Shakespearean plays. They read poetry from various periods including the sonnets of Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, the "Rape of the Lock," and some odes by Keats. They read two novels, *Joseph Andrews* and *Huck Finn*.

In "Modern Literature," they read ten short stories by such authors as Conrad, Hemingway, Sherwood, Anderson, Faulkner, and Mansfield. This year "Secret Sharer" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis McComber" were on the list. The classes read several plays including Ibsen's *The Enemy of the People* and Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar Named Desire*, and some by Chekov and Shaw. They read poetry by Frost, Yeats, Auden and others, and two novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Great Gatsby*.

The reading lists change every year, but the emphasis remains on interpretation and appreciation. The classes generally are popular, and judging by my telephone conversations, they are the effective tools of the English Department's unintentional recruiting program.

## A Cooperative Academic Enterprise in Defense of the English Language

M. RAY ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1948 the faculty of Franklin and Marshall College, alarmed by the abuse of the English in the writing of upper classmen, decided to organize for its defense. There had long been complaints against the disreputable specimens of composition produced in major

courses by students who, though they were more than halfway through college and though they had passed a year's work in composition and sometimes more, handled English speech in a way which the faculty did not consider worthy of men aspiring to graduation. The first step toward remedying the situation was to create a Committee on Standards

<sup>1</sup> Franklin and Marshall College

in English, the purpose of which is to keep watch over the daily treatment of the English language in the writing of upperclassmen. I propose in this paper to explain the procedure of this committee, to summarize its work, and to assess its success over its first six years.

The faculty started with assumptions put into the form of two resolutions, which had been drilled into them over the years by the Department of English and which were passed by unanimous vote:

Resolved, first, that it is the sense of this faculty that the Department of English is not alone the guardian of our English speech, but that all teachers who require any writing whatever in their courses share with the Department of English this responsibility.

Second, that students whose papers are conspicuously deficient in the fundamentals of good English, whatever the course, should be penalized in the grading of their papers, no matter how perfect their mastery of subject matter may be.

The Committee on Standards in English has been primarily concerned with the discharge of the first responsibility as a cooperative interdepartmental enterprise, though, as explained below, the second is hardly less important. No one—and certainly not the students—was to get the impression that this project was one of the Department of English alone. The faculty was made to feel that, as one of them put it, "it is no more reasonable to hold the Department of English solely accountable for bad student writing than it would be to hold the Department of Religion solely accountable for student immorality." It, therefore, determined that the membership of the committee should be rotating; that it should be appointed annually by the chairman of the Division of the Humanities, subject to the approval of the Academic Council; and that it should be composed of two representatives of the Division of the Humanities, at least one of whom should

be a member of the Department of English, and one representative of each of the divisions of the Social Sciences, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Business Administration.<sup>1</sup>

The committee then set up a uniform spot-testing procedure in accordance with the following proposals adopted by the faculty:

First, that it shall be the duty of this committee to read one class paper of at least three hundred words of consecutive prose written by each member of the junior class and to determine whether it meets the minimum standards of proficiency in writing. Each paper will be read by two members of the committee.

Second, that it shall be the responsibility of each head of a department to see that the committee is provided with a specimen of the writing of each of the majors in his department, the specimens to be chosen at random, without the students' awareness, from quiz or examination papers submitted in regular class work during the first semester. The paper need not be written in a course in a student's major. The science and mathematics professors, for example, may find it advisable to provide papers by some of their majors done in courses outside their departments. These papers are to be collected in accordance with a schedule set up by the committee so that they may be channeled to the committee with some degree of regularity.

Third, the students whose writing is found by the committee to be of doubtful or unsatisfactory quality shall be summoned to write under examination conditions impromptu themes of at least three hundred words each on subjects selected from a list submitted by the committee.

Fourth, that all students whose writing is found to be sub-standard in this test shall be required to enroll during the second semester of their junior year in a non-credit remedial course in composition, dismissal from which is a requisite for graduation.

<sup>1</sup> It is a pleasure to acknowledge the valuable aid given in the setting up of the program by Darrel Abel, then a member of the Department of English at Franklin and Marshall College, who drew upon his experience with a similar program at Purdue University.

In the administration of the proficiency tests we have followed certain principles for achieving uniformity of judgment and fairness to the students. In the first screening it is important that professors lift test or examination papers rather than term papers, since the latter do not so well represent habitual practice and are in expression less likely to be independent of source material. Likewise, the substitution in the first screening of impromptu themes for test or examination papers, especially in courses like mathematics and certain of the sciences where such are hard to come at, is not desirable. In the first place, such a procedure gives an unfair advantage to these students over those whose papers are lifted without their knowledge beforehand; second, it puts an extra burden upon the student who generally or always writes satisfactorily; and, third, it obviously does not test a student's use of English "when the professor is not looking." In such a situation heads of departments in the work of which junior majors produce no appreciable amount of writing which is not stylized or fragmentary are expected to consult the students' programs outside the departments of their majors and collect papers in such courses.

For the guidance of the committee in achieving some degree of uniformity in judging papers, a memorandum is provided by the Department of English. These instructions make clear that, while the readers will stress correctness of form more than grace of expression, they should not disregard general awkwardness and obscurity in the expression of ideas. Each reader will necessarily use his own standards in judging the quality achieved in the transmission of ideas, for example, in matters of diction, logic, clearness, and general effectiveness. In matters of pure form, however, readers can come nearer to a common yardstick, for example, in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and idiom. A dozen

or more inexcusable errors in these areas are listed. Any piece of writing of three hundred words which has as many as ten different errors of those listed or as many as five repetitions of any one of them is regarded as not meeting the minimal requirements in proficiency, though incompetency that does not involve mere correctness may also lead a man to fail in the first screening. Disagreements about marginal papers are resolved in conferences between the readers or by the chairman of the committee.

Since the papers are to be "chosen at random and without the students' awareness," no professor who intends to lift a group of papers for the committee should give specific assignments which are announced beforehand and the purpose of which is described. In this respect there should be uniformity of practice. Otherwise, unwarned students have a legitimate cause of complaint.

Other considerations, more directly personal, are due the students. A test the papers of which are to be lifted for the committee should not be so long as to put the average student under unusual pressure to finish it within the time set. For even the average good student, if hurried, will often sacrifice excellence in form and expression to mass of subject matter. If the student then writes in haste, he is himself to blame.

We have found that the success of this project depends much upon cultivating the spirit of cooperation among the students. For example, they should not be made to feel that failure in either of the two screenings is necessarily an academic disgrace, for this generally only increases the teachers' task. The committee in all its directives to the students involved stressed assignments to both the second screening and the remedial work, not as disciplinary, but as an opportunity to improve their writing and thus enhance their powers of communication to



wards success in their professions. Very few students have shown an unwillingness to comply.

We now turn to a summary of the activities of the committee over the first six years of its operation. The degree of cooperation achieved among the faculty in this project is gratifying. To distribute the burden of the work as much as possible the personnel of the committee was completely changed every year with the exception of the chairman, who is the head of the Department of English. Within the six years twenty-four members of the faculty besides the chairman served on the committee, representing sixteen of the seventeen departments in the college. Only two of the twenty-five were members of the Department of English. These men read 2,003 papers written by 1,176 students, each paper being read by two men. The reading load for a member of the committee was about one hundred papers. Within this period 237 students failed in the first screening, and forty-six of these failed in the second screening, and were enrolled in remedial English. Four of these forty-six were required to take remedial work in both their junior and senior years. It is to be especially noted here that twenty per cent of our juniors do not habitually write acceptable English.

That carelessness outweighs ignorance in the failures of the first screening is evident, first, from previous demonstration of academic excellence by many of the 237, not only in general work, but also in English and, second, from an examination of their performance in the second screening. Fourteen had earned A at least once in freshman English; three had been exempted from half of the freshman course in English on the basis of the showing they had made in their entrance examinations; a dozen had achieved B's in a course in expository writing taken in their sophomore year. One of them had even made a B in a course in

creative writing and professed to be interested in a literary career. He was so ashamed to appear before his peers for the second screening that he asked to be allowed to take it in private. Ten of the 237 had been on the Dean's List; one of them had been on the Honors List, which means that he had made A's in all subjects. It is certain from all this evidence that a student may be generally good without being always careful in English.

The showing of the 237 in the second screening also points up this fact. Only 19.4% of them failed. This means that 19.4% of the juniors whose daily use of English had been found to be substandard wrote thus either because they had not sufficiently mastered English composition or had forgotten much of what they had known, while 80.6% wrote poorly because they either did not take care or did not take time enough to write as well as they knew how.

Has the committee attained its objective? Over the years fewer of those failing in the first screening have been assigned to remedial training. This means a gradual whittling down of resurgent ignorance among our upperclassmen. This reduction is due in part to an extra semester of composition required of business administration students in the sophomore year, in part to a tightening in freshman grading, in part to the more diligent attention of marginal students to fundamentals—all of which have come as a result of the screening program. I do not mean, however, that the margin of ignorance is little enough for us to feel complacent about it.

To be sure, our efforts to stimulate students to write as well as they can have sometimes been disheartening. Over the years the percentage of those failing in the first screening who write poorly because they do not write up to the level of their knowledge has ranged from sixty-three to eighty-seven. Here character, human nature, and other imponderables



which vary with different classes enter.

To remedy this situation the Committee urged that part of the second resolution above which requires every professor in the college to enforce minimum standards of decency in the use of English in test, examination, and term papers by imposing penalties in grading for conspicuous deficiencies in fundamentals. The demon of carelessness cannot be even partly laid in any other way. The response of the faculty to this appeal along with the threat of the committee's Damoclean sword has instilled, it now appears, within the second generation of students since its operation began a salutary fear which is the beginning of wisdom in the habitually decent treatment of their language.

But students will not get beyond the beginning of this wisdom unless all teachers cooperate. For example, professors must keep watch *after* the junior screening program has been completed. Sometimes we have found that juniors and seniors who have passed the screening tests or have been released from the remedial work continue to write as badly as ever in their regular written assign-

ments if they are not checked periodically by the teachers in the departments of their majors. Eternal vigilance is the price of English undefiled for every one who uses it. Something pretty close to this is the price all teachers must pay for an English among our students that is at least not disrespectful. It does appear, however, that, in spite of the strictest surveillance, we shall have to endure an appreciable degree of slipshod writing. We can impart a knowledge of good writing and stimulate its practice, but we cannot guarantee it.

Whether with these more or less incorrigible violators of good form there will be an appreciable carry-over into professional life to justify the faithfulness and patience with them of our twenty-five professors is doubtful. For the majority of the students, however, it has been a salutary experience. At its best, the task of the committee can hardly be called inspirational. But it has assured itself, as it set out to do, that all our graduates, at the time they leave us at least, are treating their language with more respect and in a way more worthy of educated men.

## Providing an Audience for Freshman Compositions

BERYL M. PARRISH<sup>1</sup>

A major complaint of freshman composition students is that theme assignments are artificial and non-utilitarian. Students feel they are too often requested to write with no particular reader or audience in mind. There is no doubt that the receiver of any communication is important. The material included, the language, the attitude—all must be adjusted to the reader. Moreover, without a specified reader the students write only for the teacher. All too frequently, writing for the teach-

er inhibits honest expression, causes students to cater to the opinions of the teacher, or results in their being blocked in expression rather than forthright.

The enterprising, thoughtful instructor can overcome this problem. Obviously, students may be advised to write for an hypothetical audience of college graduates. Such an audience would require good informal usage. It would understand formal words, would recognize triteness, would expect the writer to have something worthwhile to say. Occasionally themes should likewise be directed

<sup>1</sup> Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

to classmates and read to them. Again good informal usage would be the desired standard.

Since students need an opportunity to employ all levels of usage, according to time, place, occasion, audience, the instructor can suggest numerous occasions and audiences which will require judgment on the part of the students as to the appropriate level. The following assignments have proved successful in my own composition classes.

For a number of topics students may appropriately use an informal level which approaches the best speech of cultured people, with fairly full constructions, specific diction, and varied sentences. To parents and high-school students a more familiar level would be equally acceptable, including contractions, more colloquial diction, even dialect expressions, fewer formal words. In addition, the student must appropriately use *affective* and *report* language. The informal level may range, then, from the familiar to the more highly literary level.

1. Write the body of a letter to the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* or some other magazine evaluating an article that appeared in the magazine. (High informal with some formal vocabulary).
2. Write the body of a letter to a foreign friend describing the customs of the United States. (Informal level avoiding as nearly as possible *diction* with *special connotations* for Americans).
3. Explain a farm experience to a city-born classmate. (Informal).
4. Write an article directed to the Chamber of Commerce objecting to or favoring some community project. (Informal).
5. A friend is planning to move to your area—East, West, South, or Middle West. Tell him why you enjoy this area and why he will like it too. (Informal).
6. Write for *Time Magazine* a man-of-the-week article. (Informal) Write for the *Reader's Digest* an article on My Most Unforgettable Character. (Informal) For the *New Yorker* write a profile of an eccentric character. (More literary informal).
7. For your parents justify your choice of a career. (Informal with colloquial diction, somewhat more familiar level).
8. Write the meaning of a poem, a short story, or an essay for a high-school senior. (Informal, more familiar level).
9. Write the character study of some historical figure for your history class. (Informal)
10. For your history class describe the period of history in which you would like to have lived and why. (Informal).
11. For *Parents' Magazine* write an article giving your advice to parents who are worried about their children's reading of the comics. (Informal).
12. Write a newspaper article condemning race prejudice, slums, some social injustice. (Informal).
13. To a broadcasting company write your protest against a certain program or certain kinds of programs. (Informal).
14. For a Planning Committee write your plan for a Community Recreation Center. (Informal).
15. For a beginner in a sport describe the special sensations derived from a participation in the sport. (Familiar and informal).
16. Write an article for a general reader making clear such an abstract term as *honor*, *patriotism*, *integrity*. (Informal).
17. For the *Atlantic Monthly* write your description of the typical American. (Informal).

18. For your grandparents write your comments on the question: Are we wiser than our forefathers? (Informal).
19. For a dormitory "bull session" tell an episode from your childhood which stands out in your memory. (Informal with occasional use of slang, contractions, more colloquial rhythm and diction).
20. For your faculty counsellor describe the most important events that have happened to you in college thus far. (High informal).
21. A classmate is discouraged about the values of a college education. Write a theme in which you try to explain to him the values as you see them. (Informal).
22. Tell your dormitory mates how you taught yourself something. (Informal and familiar).
23. For a classmate who is going to spend a weekend at your home describe the family life which he is about to join. (Informal).
24. For a younger brother or sister explain how to make something, a process, a game, a hobby. (Informal and familiar).
25. Write your response to a radio commentator's assertion that the younger generation is insensitive, realistic, cynical. (Informal).
26. For a favorite teacher or for a meeting of Future Teachers of America write your definition of a great teacher. (Informal or formal).
27. For your parents write your comments on home discipline. (Informal).
28. For your instructor or parents discuss some of the things adults cannot understand about youth. (Informal or formal).
29. Explain to a high-school student the propaganda devices used in a piece of advertising, a newspaper article, or in a political article or speech. (Informal with colloquial diction, very clear expression).
30. For a high-school student analyze the connotations of words in an early piece of writing such as Bacon's essay on "Studies." (Informal).
31. For your local newspaper write an article on the subject "How Free Should Expression Be?" (Informal).
32. Write the body of a letter to fraternities and sororities on the subject of improving the scholarship of chapter members. (Informal).
33. Write an address to be read at a freshman assembly during orientation week on the values and responsibilities of fraternity and sorority life. (Informal).
34. Write the body of a letter to the Student Senate proposing some campus improvement. (Informal).
35. For your music instructor tell how you learned to like symphonic music. (Formal or informal).
36. Tell your English instructor how you learned that the study of literature is practical after 'all. (Formal or informal).
37. For your English instructor tell about interesting reading you have done. (Informal or formal).
38. Tell your parents how college has contributed toward your maturity and personality. (Informal).
39. Write your high-school principal about your views on the use of movies in education. (Informal or formal).
40. To the high-school senior class in your home town write your views on the importance of adequate preparation in English in high school. (Informal).
41. Tell your parents or friends about a prejudice college has helped you overcome. (Informal).
42. Explain to your classmates what you think Archibald MacLeish meant by his statement "For the American

Citadel is *a man*" in his article "To Make Men Free." (Informal or Formal).

43. Write to a local school board your views on the topic "Is there an overemphasis on athletics in the schools?" (Informal).
44. Write to the state legislature your convictions about "What your State ought to do for its schools." (Informal or formal).

For the following topics a more formal level of usage might effectively be employed. The constructions would be filled out; prepositions and conjunctions would be repeated in parallel constructions; sentences would be longer and more elaborately constructed with parallel and balanced clauses; vocabulary would be closer to written than to spoken English.

45. To Bernard Iddings Bell write your response to his assertion in *Crisis in Education* that Americans are immature. (Formal).
46. Write a research paper on the topic "How to Solve the Problem of Inadequate Food Supply in Over-Populated Areas" to be submitted in an essay contest. (Formal).
47. For a meeting of a science club write your answer to the question: Is science compelling man to become more humane? (Formal).
48. Write to Gilbert Highet your response to his article "The American Student as I See Him." (Formal).
49. Write an address to be read in chapel on the part religion plays in

campus life. (High informal would also be appropriate).

In their personal letter-writing, which is usually a part of the freshman composition program, students can be permitted to do something creative and to employ all three levels of usage—formal, informal, vulgate (for realistic conversation, dialogue, or characterizations of people)—as the subject matter and reader may require. To make their letter-writing more interesting, original, and witty, they may be encouraged to use quotations, striking remarks, lines of poetry, to give verbal snapshots of the campus and of home life, to discuss a good magazine article or book, a project or an organization. For novel treatment the letter could be written in the form of a miniature newspaper (including news style, special articles, features, book reviews, editorials on some topic of mutual interest); in radio announcer style; in the form of a parody of Biblical rhythms or of a hit tune.

By providing a variety of readers for student themes, the instructor is motivating writing and is helping the student realize the values and satisfactions of writing—the pleasure we take in sharing with someone else or with many people the ideas, problems, and experiences that are interesting to us; the pleasure we get from convincing or deeply affecting someone; the satisfaction we derive from having experienced a sense of growth or accomplishment as we succeed in communicating to others, in doing something worthwhile.

## High School-College Cooperation in English<sup>1</sup>

W. S. WARD<sup>2</sup>

Though one or two of the high school-college cooperative practices I shall cite

originated in the 1930's, most of them are post-war in origin. Only a few, in fact, are firmly established; most are in the experimental stage and are still seeking direction.

<sup>1</sup> This paper in its original form was presented in Panel 3 at the Spring Meeting, March 25, 1955, Hotel Morrison, Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> University of Kentucky



As the first speaker on this panel I shall report briefly on the practices I have some knowledge of and shall hope that those of you who know of other practices will call them to my attention.

#### STATE-WIDE COOPERATIVE PRACTICES

##### 1) *Unified standards: Grades 1 through 14:*

One articulation device, of course, is the unified, state-wide set of standards that extends from the first grade through the twelfth. Extension into the college years, however, is still largely in the talking stage. All that your speaker can report is that the Jacksonville, Alabama, school system (the elementary school, the high school, and the college) has drawn up such a set of standards and that Georgia can announce that its English Commission is beginning to prepare a manual for the teaching of English from the elementary grades through junior college.

##### 2) *The Composition Booklet:*

Another effective device which is state-wide and involves the cooperation of both the high schools and the colleges is a booklet which sets forth the philosophy of composition of those preparing it, contains representative themes at different grade levels, and analyzes and comments on each theme. Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, and Wisconsin have already published booklets of this sort; and Kentucky will do so in the summer of 1956.

##### 3) *State affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English:*

Another successful way of getting at the problem of articulation is through the state council affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English. Made up as these councils are of elementary, high-school, and college teachers, both their annual meetings and their publications tend to acquaint their members with the

problem at the various levels, especially if the councils have committees which deal specifically with articulation.

Worthy of particular mention, I think, are those states in which the state council has an executive secretary, editor, or other semi-permanent officer who is a member of the English department of a college (commonly the state university) and devotes a part of his time to the work of the council. Among the states where a plan of this sort seems to be working with success are Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Tennessee, I believe, has done more with this plan than any other state. A full account of the Tennessee plan, written by Executive Secretary Charles F. Webb, appears in *College Composition and Communication*, February, 1956.

Comparable to the Tennessee plan—but without the systematic school visitation—is the one in North Carolina. Under the leadership of the Executive Secretary (Earl Hartsell), a member of the English Department of the state university, the program of high school-college relationship operates continuously, chiefly through committees and local regional meetings of English teachers from both the high-school and the college levels.

Other state council activities which extend beyond the usual state-wide annual meeting include the following:

- (1) In New York, the state council (whose three vice-presidents represent the three levels of elementary, high-school, and college work) holds annual regional conferences in the six areas into which the state is divided.
- (2) In Virginia, the Virginia Association of Teachers of English spon-



sors a two-week institute. Both high-school and college teachers of English participate.

- (3) In Georgia, the Council holds eleven district meetings in the fall. In these meetings both colleges and public schools are represented.
- (4) In Oklahoma, the council sponsors regional conferences in twelve areas of the state. These conferences are held on college campuses in the various areas and are attended by college, high-school, and elementary teachers, as well as by college and public-school administrators. The Oklahoma Council also has a state-wide College-High School Articulation Committee.
- (5) In Kentucky, the short sessions formerly held in education districts in conjunction with annual education association meetings are rapidly being supplemented or replaced by one- and two-day workshops.

#### 4) Other State-Wide Cooperative Endeavors:

There are still other state-wide cooperative endeavors in which organizations or committees of English teachers work in cooperation with representatives of other educational groups.

- (1) In Alabama, the College English Teachers Association and the Department of English Teachers of the Alabama Education Association have sponsored meetings involving quite a number of colleges and over fifty high schools; and the same two groups have prepared and adopted a set of "Suggestions about Preparation for College English."
- (2) In Kentucky, high-school and college teachers of English, the state council, and the State Department of Education are cooperating in the preparation and publication of a composition booklet which contains a Statement of Principles, representative themes at five grade lev-

els, and critical analyses of each theme.

- (3) In New Jersey, the English department at Rutgers, in addition to assisting both the State Department and the state council, has held a Joint Conference on English in High Schools and Colleges.
- (4) In New York, a Committee of three college teachers has been set up by the State Department to collaborate with a committee of high-school representatives in redefining the English competencies needed for college entrance.
- (5) In North Carolina, both college and high-school English teachers are working together to revise the high-school section of the State Department *Language Arts Bulletin*, the official manual for all public-school teachers of English.
- (6) In Texas, the Conference of College Teachers of English and the Texas State Teachers Association cooperate in sponsoring annually eleven regional workshops which deal with standards and the articulation of high school-college composition.
- (7) In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Conference on Communication has brought together teachers of English, Speech, and Journalism from nearly every grade level for a week of lectures and discussions of "current problems in the English field."

#### MISCELLANEOUS PRACTICES IN INDIVIDUAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In conclusion let me cite briefly a few other practices in individual colleges which, though not cooperative ventures, are a part of the total picture of high school-college articulation:

- 1) A conference of high-school principals (sometimes with teachers in the subject-matter areas) on a college campus for the purpose of better integrating high-school and college

- work, including English (the universities of Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, and Purdue).
- 2) The "Open House" where English teachers are invited to a campus to observe classes in freshman composition and attend meetings where high-school and college teachers participate in a discussion of matters of mutual interest (the universities of Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, and Virginia).
  - 3) Summer workshops and county institutes where college and high-school teachers work together on mutual problems (Indiana State Teachers College, and the universities of Indiana, Kansas, and Purdue).
  - 4) Visitation and consultation services available to high schools, ranging in scope from one-day conferences to a series of meetings scheduled through a term or school year (Longwood College, Va., Michigan State University, and the universities of Kansas and Michigan).
  - 5) The publication (and distribution to high schools) of a pamphlet which sets forth the school's philosophy of freshman composition and contains a description of the objectives and contents of the courses which satisfy the freshman composition requirements (Rutgers and the universities of Kansas and Kentucky; in Illinois the state council's *Bulletin* published information of this sort on twelve Illinois colleges).
  - 6) Periodic leaflets which contain news and helpful discussions designed to promote better understanding and cooperatively with high-school English teachers of English (Purdue).
  - 7) Permanent departmental High School Relations committees designed to explore methods of working cooperatively with high-school English teachers (Purdue and Duke).
  - 8) The grading of sample sets of themes for those high schools which request such a service (the universities of Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, and Purdue).
  - 9) Invitation to an outstanding high-school teacher to become a one-year member of a college composition staff in order that each level may have an increased understanding of the problems and objectives of the other.
  - 10) Partial subsidization of the publications of state councils (the universities of Georgia, Illinois, and Kentucky).
- As I said in the beginning, we are far from having done enough, but I believe we have cause to be hopeful.

## The Term Paper, Again

### *Not One Paper, but Two*

BYRON GUYER<sup>1</sup>

Like most English teachers—and their freshman students—I had been unhappy over the usual term papers that emerged from weeks of effort to master the essentials of this craft. Yet the long term paper involving research and the creation of a

theme idea could not be skimmed. Students agreed that it was necessary, and most of them tried hard to write a good one. Yet the usual misunderstandings led to the usual blunders and the usual grades. The main note of encouragement came through the insistence of many stu-

<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles State College

dents that having once been through the process of writing a research paper, they could at last "see the whole thing." They wanted to try again. Since many of these very students had invested hours of genuine work in papers that turned out poorly, their request deserved more than polite consideration. What changes in teaching the term paper did their comments point to?

So long as the plan had been to do a single term paper in the first semester of freshman English, I had not asked every student to write on the same subject, or even on subjects within the same area of knowledge, for it seems to me that full intelligence is put to work in writing only when the subject holds importance for the writer. On the other hand, when each student writes on his own subject, it is nearly impossible to develop in class lessons about the term paper full of meaning to every student. If, however, the course plan calls for two term papers, the first can be devoted to a single problem thoroughly covered in class, and the second can be written later in the semester on any subject of interest. So my thoughts ran. And since there was little to lose and something to gain, I experimented with this approach.

First I needed a subject for the class that would meet these requirements: a) it ought to take the student into the library to search among books and periodicals; b) it ought to be about equally interesting to men and women students; c) it ought to lead into some reasonably intricate and complex ideas and yet not be highly abstract; d) it ought to require application of the scientific method and methods of critical thinking; e) it should involve the weighing of authorities; f) the subject ought to pose a real problem worth some investigation by college students. I finally decided that one subject meeting most of these requirements was that of flying saucers.

Soon after making this decision I

broached the subject to the class. Discussion was lively. Attitudes toward the existence of flying saucers ran from scornful disbelief through cool skepticism to rock-like belief. The discussion was concluded when a bright student pointed out that the problem to be investigated was simply, "Do Flying Saucers Exist?" Now we had the subject in focus. I pointed out how necessary such focusing is early in the writing of a term paper. We were off.

Students searched through the library, learning or re-learning the uses of *The Reader's Guide*, the library catalog, the classification system, the cumulative index of *Books in Print*, and so on; then they brought their findings to class and pooled their bibliographical information. Careless and hasty work on bibliography was quickly revealed. After allowing a few days for reading and preliminary note taking, I was able to demonstrate in class the making of note cards and bibliography cards of actual use in writing the rough draft of the paper. Since every student was trying to make up just such note cards, their questions about bibliography and notes had relevance. As a matter of fact, the better students supplied answers to most of the questions raised. During the next few days while students were reading the available material and keeping a weather eye out for more, we devoted class time to study of the scientific method. Paragraph by paragraph we read Huxley's essay, "The Method of Scientific Investigation," and we developed all sorts of everyday examples of the use of the method. Then we discussed how we could apply the method to our problem of the saucers. Next we took up the problem of weighing authority. Here we found that a weakness in the subject of flying saucers was the scarcity of books on the subject. Nevertheless, we had an abundance of periodical material from various sources: science fiction, popular magazines, special journals such as *Scientific American*, and

the well-known Air Force report. Our devotee of science fiction grew paler as his classmates reported the qualifications of Shapley and those experts chosen by the Air Force for its study. Students now began to notice that most of the reports of eye witnesses were clouded by obscurities and ambiguities, and that unaccountable gaps turned up in their stories. The patient thoroughness behind the Air Force report emerged as students reported and discussed in class every "document" they could lay their hands on. Naive students came to see Gerald Heard not as a reporter but as a writer of fiction. And the stacks of note cards grew.

By the time the class had thoroughly covered the scientific method and the weighing of authority, all but the weakest students had ample material. Then I began demonstrations on the blackboard of how note cards could be arranged in various patterns to support various theme ideas for the whole paper. Most students now saw clearly that the flexibility of note cards was more than a mere convenience. Some now understood that content and form are inseparable. These demonstrations of possible orders for the paper drew on the students' earlier work in the patterns of paragraphs. Most students discovered for themselves that a long paper can be planned in considerable detail before much of the writing out on sheets of paper is done. Instead of using the conventional outline which depends on indentation of headings and on roman numerals and upper- and lower-case letters, we used a long diagonal line on which we wrote a one-sentence statement of the theme or "thesis" of the paper, and branching lines depending from the long diagonal on which we wrote the topic sentence of each paragraph. Last, we wrote out on the board a few paragraphs of beginnings for these demonstration papers. Nearly everyone was now ready to start a rough draft.

While the students wrote rough drafts as homework, in class they studied the academic apparatus of footnotes and bibliography. These tools of the researcher now had meaning for the freshman students because they were actually needed. Engaged in writing, the students brought a great many questions to class that fitted neatly into my exposition of the ins and outs of the formal research paper. From their perspective, of course, the instructor's exposition fitted neatly into their homework. When we were at last through the study of footnotes and bibliography, we spent three class hours reviewing the elements of good composition as these would enter their successive revisions of rough drafts. After students had revised their papers at least three times, they handed them in, and I looked them over to point out where further revision could be made. The better the student, the more general were my suggestions for revision: your diction suffers from too many vague words, or, your sentence structure would benefit from better coordination and subordination, or, some of your paragraphs lack focus and clear relation to the theme of your paper. The weaker the student, the more specific were my revisions.

After the final revision had been made into a fair copy, the project was still not quite over. When the papers had been marked, graded, and returned, we read aloud two superior papers, one average paper, and a poor one—anonymously of course. As a matter of fact, because one class consisted of about fifteen students, it was possible to use the opaque projector, projecting each page on a screen. Thorough discussion of the merits and faults of the papers used for illustration concluded our venture in writing up an investigation of flying saucers. What did students think of this approach to the freshman term paper?

The majority of students in my two classes of freshman English thought that



they had finally come to grips with how to write a college term paper. They thought that they now understood what the researcher must do in his investigation. They thought that they could now write a term paper reflective of their abilities; whereas before the project, they believed, the problems of the form of the term paper so preoccupied them as to interfere with showing their abilities to investigate and report on a subject. They also thought that they had learned something about the scientific method and about critical thinking.

Later in the freshman English course, when these students did their "original" papers on the subjects of their own choice, they showed more self-confidence, knowledge, and skill. Above all, they did their own thinking, and they developed a theme instead of merely stringing together a long series of quotations from their sources. On the second term paper—done entirely on their own—two students failed. One failing paper was obviously a last-minute stab at writing up something; the other was simply plagiarism. There were very few D's, and not

one of the D's went on a paper that was bad despite hours and hours of work. Those who were willing to put in the many hours of work necessary for writing a successful term paper were apparently able to make the final copy reflect their careful thought and their good sense. There were more A and B papers than I had ever had before in similar classes of freshman English at the same institution. The two top papers in one class were, it seemed to me, quite good enough to be published—except for the fact that the writers had no reputation and authoritativeness in the fields investigated. For my personal satisfaction I had the realization that the bulk of the students had really understood the lessons about the term paper. I did not have to face the old sickening feeling that most of the class just couldn't write a "real" term paper. Here was a modest but genuine success in that impossible subject, freshman English. I'm going to handle the term paper the same way again. This time, at the urging of a colleague in physics, I will offer my classes the subject of rain making.

### *Avoiding Superficiality*

ARTHUR S. HARRIS, JR.<sup>1</sup>

Research papers—or do you call them *source themes* or *library papers*? Most college teachers I know sigh heavily at the mention of these annual freshman onslaughts upon the library and the resulting papers: "The Life of Louis Pasteur" (in 9-1/2 pages), "The Discovery, Use, and Future of Penicillin" (in 7-1/2 pages, perhaps by a prospective English major), or "The Poetry of Longfellow," (by an Aggie?), and those admiring papers on Jack Dempsey, Babe Ruth, and Red Grange by the boys on athletic scholarships.

Let's face it: the papers are generally superficial, unoriginal, dull. But we can get some interesting and original papers if we direct our work on the papers as carefully as we explicate "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." I suggest two premises:

First, *it is not best to let students choose their own subjects freely*. To some this sounds like classroom autocracy, but free choice often works to the students' disadvantage:

1. They often choose subjects on which they can not report objectively. In Georgia I had eulogistic papers on Eu-

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gene Talmadge; in Massachusetts on James Michael Curley!

2. They choose hobbies as subjects and write papers on coin-collecting and ice-boating from pamphlets at home rather than at the library.

3. Students choose technical subjects. Even if the student knows his subject, what instructor, deeply versed in the symbolism of Melville, can discover superficiality in a paper on chinchillas or selective hardwood cuttings?

4. Students often choose unoriginal subjects. Is there anywhere an overworked instructor who has not read a paper on "Susan B. Anthony and the Vote," "The Repeal of the 18th Amendment," "The Founding of the Olympic Games," or "George Washington Carver and the Peanut"?

5. Students choose monumental subjects—e.g., "The History of the League of Nations," "The Causes of World War II,"—all in ten pages or less!

6. Free choice invites occasional plagiarism. To kill time once I picked up a paper on miscegenation from a fellow instructor's desk and was leafing through it when I had the peculiar feeling I had read it all before. I had—the previous spring. And before our Department Chairman got through with his investigation, he'd turned up half a dozen nearly identical papers on miscegenation—all with different grades! (That was the spring we abandoned the source theme altogether.)

No, free choice of subjects is not the answer. But limited choice works well. I started by dreaming up a hundred and fifty subjects and letting students choose from the list. Of course I've added to the list and taken away, but the principle of suggesting a subject remains.

Originally I had merely a listing of names, many of them writers, especially those I felt I knew something about. Why not? If I know Thomas Wolfe well

and happen somewhere in my dim collegiate past to have written a paper on his relationship with Maxwell Perkins, am I not in a good position to guide a student through the same maze? And if he doesn't show Vardis Fisher, Struthers Burt, or Claude Simpson in his bibliography, I will know it in a moment. What chance would I have plowing through a paper on "Basic Elements of the Air-screw Theory?"

Perhaps you have already anticipated my second premise: *the subject chosen should be highly restricted*. I do not read such papers as: "The Life of Aaron Burr," "Primitive People and Their Customs," "Socialized Medicine," "The Works of W. S. Maugham," or "The History of Clipper Ships."

Here are the sort of papers I have read: "Robert Frost as a Teacher," "Felix Frankfurter's Early View of the Sacco-Vanzetti Case," "Marian Anderson's Dispute with the D.A.R.," "The Early Critical Reception of *A Farewell to Arms*," "New York City Censorship of *The Miracle*," "The Relationship between Al Smith and Robert Moses," or "Catholicism as an Issue in the Campaign of 1928."

It seems to me there are some original subjects here, original enough for any first-year student. Certainly Catholicism in the 1928 election is somewhat of an old chestnut, but for my student who was both a prospective Government major and a Catholic, it was an ideal subject.

I wish I could claim credit for the paper "Robert Frost as a Teacher" which was done for the instructor who shared my basement office. At the time it was written a few years ago, it was almost wholly original—at least the Frost man in our department said so. And yet at the start the freshman who wrote the paper knew only that he wanted to investigate a writer. When my office-mate found out that his student was also in-

terested in teaching, he struck on the idea of living writers who were teachers. He thought of Gerald Warner Brace, Mary Ellen Chase, Hudson Strode, Robert Penn Warren. And then of Frost, who once taught in New Hampshire. That was it.

The boy worked hard on this paper and I followed it as if it were my own. He wrote letters and did a lot of library digging. And he wrote to Frost. It wasn't one of those wide-eyed letters: "I am writing a paper on you. Please send me information." Instead he wrote of his interest in the poet's days as a teacher in Derry, New Hampshire. He told him what he had found so far and what he wanted to know. Within a week he received from South Miami, Florida, a four-page handwritten letter answering in some detail.

In order to get such restricted papers, one has to remember how much has been written on specific subjects. In one month three new books on Whitman may appear: one each on Whitman as a scientist, as an educator, and as a newspaperman. There is so much about Lincoln, how about Lincoln's relation with someone, say Horace Greeley? Then a book turns up: *Lincoln and Greeley*. Finding an original subject seems discouraging, but it can be done. In fact it can even be done with Lincoln. Although I would ordinarily suggest some other subject, a student could quite possibly do what one of mine did once: "Reaction of the Springfield *Republican* to Lincoln's Death."

But perhaps the best papers are written on the gestation of books. A few years ago a student who was delving in-

to Somerset Maugham found out that Maugham actually wrote *Of Human Bondage* at quite an early age; it had a different title and I think Philip's name was Stephen. The student wrote a fine research paper on simply the writing and eventual publication of that single book—the drafts it went through, the title changes, the publishers who refused it. The same treatment works well with books such as *Across the River and into the Trees*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Of Time and the River*. (Remember Wolfe himself wrote a slender volume entirely about the writing of that novel.)

When this approach doesn't work out well, I often suggest doing thoroughly what the *Book Review Digest* does in four of five inches of narrow column. A student may not like *Arrowsmith*. He picks up steam when he reads Gilbert Highet's opinion of it—that it is shallow and adolescent. The student wonders what the reviewers of the twenties thought of it, how Lewis wrote it, what he thought of it himself. *The Book Review Digest* can be only a mere starting place. Knowing the date of writing and publication, the student is ready to turn the library upside down. And when he finishes he may not know everything about Sinclair Lewis, he may know nothing whatever of *Dodsworth* or *Main Street*, but it is possible he may know more than any living man about the reception *Arrowsmith* got in the twenties. And incidentally I think too, searching for old newspapers and magazines, he's learned more about the library than the student who writes his research paper out of a half dozen books borrowed for two weeks from the library.

### ***The Term Paper Topic — Instructor's Choice***

T. B. STRANDNESS<sup>1</sup>

I had asked the class to read Carl Van Doren's essay on "Choosing a Topic for

Research" and to come prepared with some ideas for their approaching work in the library. Carl Van Doren's advice in

<sup>1</sup>Michigan State College

the essay was excellent and in no way unusual: they must choose topics in which they were burning interested. Very good. The hitch was that many of the topics for which they professed the necessary burning interest were ones which I had good reason to regard with an equally warm distaste. I don't remember if the origin of jazz and the development of the diesel engine were among the suggestions made, but they could have been. Cancer, Sister Kenny, Dutch Elm Tree blight, the Whooping Crane, music therapy—anyone who has taught the library paper more than twice can make his own tired list.

Not that there is anything wrong with such topics in themselves; what is wrong is the fact that, all too often, they are chosen as the result of (1) a momentary stimulation derived from a magazine article, (2) a hurried conference with a roommate, (3) the memory of a similar paper done in high school, or (4) the shrewd suggestion of an upper-class buddy who "knows of a paper that's got A's three times in a row." Few of them, certainly, represented possibilities which, in the words of Mr. Van Doren, "interest and excite us." "It is our own fault," he warns, "if we choose topics in which we are not interested." To which the student replies: "I suppose I agree, but that doesn't help me get a red-hot topic. Anyhow, I don't expect to get excited over this. Doing it makes good sense, I guess, but all I'm honestly aiming for is to get it done. So I flip a coin and say I'd like to write on 'The Arabian Horse.'" (Let the reader ask himself how much "interest and excitement" went into the choice of subject for *his* freshman research paper.)

I told the class that I found myself mightily depressed by the idea of reading a set of papers on the suggested topics, that most of them obviously did not proceed from the kind of interest Van Doren spoke about, that I knew many

of the papers would be stillborn as a result, and that I'd like until the next class meeting to think what might best be done.

That night I asked myself how a project might be framed which would allow the student to pursue a line of inquiry suited to his interests and which, at the same time, would permit me to read something in which I had an interest as well. The difficult thing, apparently, was asking the question, for a possible answer presented itself almost at once. At our next meeting I spoke to the class as follows: "We are repeatedly reminded that communication is a two-way process, a fairly obvious fact but one that is easy to forget. We write, presumably, from our interests to the interests of our audience. Given such conditions, many of the topic suggestions made at our last meeting would appear to be twice-cursed—by your feeling about them and by my own. Would it not be a fine thing if, instead, they might be twice-blessed—by your interest in them as writers and by mine as reader. Such a thing is possible." I told them that a subject of lively interest, for me, was the people and culture of Asia. I reminded them of the obviously increasing importance of Asia in all our lives and of the equally obvious ignorance of most of us concerning this ancient and complex part of the world. I showed them how it was possible for the particular interest of any one of them to be extended into this general area. Since their reports would be both spoken and written, I asked that they divide themselves into groups of five or six and fix on a particular national or cultural division of the general area.

A few minutes' discussion sufficed for one group to announce its choice of Korea and others of China, India, Japan, Polynesia. Topic possibilities were both interesting and obvious. An English major chose to report on Chinese poetry, an Ag student on China's battle with the

Yellow River, an ex-G.I. on Japan's Geisha girl, a student with an interest in sociology on India's caste system, and so on.

At the completion of the project several distinct advantages of this approach had become clear. In the first place, the work of the class had a unity which that of previous classes had lacked. This was particularly true during the hours devoted to the group reports. Second, an increased identity of interests resulted in a livelier sense of a real audience for which to speak and write. Third, students were sometimes able to help each other in the search for good sources. Fourth, the sense of a worthy general aim, namely to learn what we could about an important segment of the human scene, helped eliminate the feeling that the work was merely "a library exercise." Fifth, my chances of getting the paper which had "got A's three times in a row" were greatly reduced. Finally, I, the reader of the papers, was able to approach my work in an interested frame of mind.

The radical assumption in this approach is the right of the teacher to participate normally in the communication process. It implies, on the one hand, the teacher's right to be a real audience and,

on the other, the student's right to speak and write for one. The more conventional assumption is that the teacher of freshman speakers and writers should be one whose cheery zest knows neither bounds nor reason. If he is too intelligent to satisfy these specifications, he becomes a weary drudge who bears his cross and looks toward the teaching of some upper-class course from whence cometh his help.

A colleague of mine remarked bitterly the other day that the Englishman who defined hell as a place where one is allowed to do nothing but read the reports of Parliamentary debates quite obviously hadn't had the experience of teaching freshmen the "library paper." He said he breaks into a cold sweat whenever the subject is introduced and goes into a swift decline as the day of ultimate torment approaches, when the stack of final drafts stands waiting to be read. "Why must I read about the origins of jazz?" he groaned; "I know all about the origins of jazz. I ought to, God knows; I've been told about it often enough. As for the diesel engine . . ." Words failed him. His voice had risen to an outraged squeak.

Why must he? A fair answer would seem to be, Why, indeed?

## Secretary's Report No. 16

GLADYS K. BROWN<sup>1</sup>

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee, Conference on College Composition and Communication, Hudson Room, Hotel Statler, New York, Thursday, March 22, 1956, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and 10 p.m. to 12 midnight; Chairman Irwin Griggs presiding. Members present: Adler, Archer, Barnhart, Beal, Blickle, Blue, Bowersox, Bowman, Brown, Cosper, Dean, Nina Draxten (for

Reisman), Fowler, Francis, Griggs, Hayford, Hook, Jaynes, Kitzhaber, Layer, McCrimmon, Morgan, Myers, Shoemaker, Singleton, Steinberg, Sutton, Thomas, Tuttle, Upton, VanGelder, Ward, Weimer, White, Wikelund, Wise, and Committee Chairmen Willis C. Jackman and George Kelly.

1. The Chairman extended greetings and introduced all persons present.

2. Officers reported as follows:

<sup>1</sup>Little Rock Junior College



Francis Shoemaker, Program Chairman, presented the program as printed except for the substitution of Leo C. Rosten for Lyman Bryson, who was ill. Mr. Shoemaker called attention to the Thursday Coffee Hour, 10:30 to 11:30, scheduled for the Washington Room, with Mrs. Grace Stuart Nutley as hostess, and the Friday Coffee Break, 10:30 to 11, in the Georgian Foyer. He also reported that for preparation and support of the luncheon CCCC was indebted to the local committees and to the four organizations—Conference on College English, College English Association, New York Association of Teachers of English, College English Association, New York Association of Teachers of English, New York Council of College Teachers of English—which gave up their meetings to join with the National Council's CCCC.

Assistant Chairman Robert Tuttle attributed much of the preparation toward the 1957 conference at Chicago to Local Chairman Willis C. Jackman. Mr. Tuttle distributed blanks entitled "Guide for 1957 Program Planning" to be filled in by all participants in the conference in evaluation of general sessions, panels, and workshops.

Secretary Gladys K. Brown distributed copies of an alphabetized membership roll made from the CCC mailing list for February, 1956. Some members expressed their preference for a roll by states.

Treasurer J. N. Hook reported an increase of 121 in membership as of March 1, including February expirations, which gave an all-time high of 1203 members. He reported a substantial balance in the treasury. Some discussion took place of the unexpected increase in charge for book exhibit space for the reason that such exhibits had been classed as commercial. Mr. Hook suggested that in the future the Local Committee should see that the contract with the hotel be clear

and definite about the status of the exhibits.

Editor Bowman announced that two members of the Editorial Board, Jane Dale and James B. McMillan, will normally complete their terms this year and that nominations for replacements would be welcomed, action due at the November meeting. He reported the resignation of Jean Malmstrom as liaison officer between CCCC and NSSC; action for replacement occurs later on the agenda. He reported satisfaction with the work of the printer of CCC, who voluntarily read galley proof and made up pages, with no charges for corrections in page proof. Normal printing cost for one issue is about \$520. The October issue will contain recorders' reports of workshops and panels. Concerning offprints for authors, until demand increases, present practice will be continued of giving authors four copies of the issue and the opportunity of buying a limited number of additional copies at twenty-five cents each. Mr. Hook suggested that a form letter inquiring about the need of additional copies of an article or a series of articles for instructors who wish them for class use be sent to members of CCCC. Designs for a possible cover for CCC are being prepared and will be submitted for approval. The editor was empowered to inquire into the possibility of introducing advertising into CCC whenever general sentiment or financial need seemed to favor proposing the move, with the understanding that advertising in CCC would not diminish that in *College English*. Editor Bowman made the usual request for good articles. Mr. Hook reported that subscription agencies had been notified of permission to solicit subscriptions to CCC.

3. Chairman Griggs announced that the CCCC will be listed in the PMLA Directory of Useful Addresses, and Mr. Hook called attention to CCCC publicity in the *English Journal*.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to the effect that "the Executive Committee empower the NCTE to incorporate in the annual fall letter to high-school teachers an invitation to membership in the CCCC and an invitation to high-school libraries to subscribe for CCC." Attention was called to the fact that anyone may subscribe to CCC without membership in the CCCC. A proposal was discussed without action to consider permanent representation of high schools on the Executive Committee.

Local high-school representatives Miss Koetat and Dr. Schweitzer were not present. It was moved, seconded, and carried that local high-school representatives be invited to assist in the plans of the March, 1957, meeting.

4. Willis C. Jackman, Local Chairman for the March 21-23, 1957, meeting at the Hotel Morrison, Chicago, called attention to the conveniences of the hotel and reported investigations of the Sherman Hotel as a possible site for the next Chicago meeting. Mr. Jackman requested to be a member of the local committee for that meeting. Chairman Griggs gave assurance that the request would be granted.

5. Secretary Brown suggested that the February issue of CCC is perhaps too late to carry the only announcement of the Placement Service, which is free to CCCC members and active only during the spring meetings. Consensus was that the announcement should appear in earlier issues. The committee approved an announcement of the Placement Service to be made in *College English*. Consideration was given to separating the work of this Service from the duties of the Secretary. It was moved, seconded, and carried that a committee be appointed by the chairman to study and report on possible modifications of this Service.

6. Hermann Bowersox, chairman of a committee appointed by Jerome Arch-

er, November 24, 1955, to "offer a plan for selecting the sites of future spring meetings after examining the whole problem of geographical locations and cycles," announced that he had no formal report because the members could not agree on a plan. However, he reported the varying opinions of the committee members.

A motion to move the 1958 meetings to San Francisco having failed, Mr. Morgan introduced a motion to hold the 1959 meetings in San Francisco. The motion was seconded and carried. It was moved, seconded, and carried to hold the 1958 meetings in Philadelphia. Looking forward to 1960 Chairman Griggs authorized Committee Chairman Bowersox to continue investigating hotels and to include an investigation of the hotel situation in New Orleans. It was suggested that the committee talk with Lou LaBrant about her investigations of hotels in various cities.

7. Announcement was made of the recent appointment of Richard Beal as chairman of the Membership Committee. The appointment was too recent to permit preparation of a report.

8. J. N. Hook announced that the membership roll for 1957 would be made up in December, 1956, and mailed as of January, 1957. There was discussion led by George Kelly of how large potential CCCC membership could be.

(The meeting recessed at this point at 12 noon and reconvened at 10 p.m. in the same place.)

9. Stewart Morgan reported that his committee (Mrs. Margaret Blickle, Cecil Blue, Alfred Grommon, Mary W. White), appointed to study and make recommendations to the NCTE concerning pamphlets evaluating student themes, approved of two pamphlets: *Evaluating Student Themes* by Ednah Shepard Thomas (University of Wisconsin Press, 1955) and *Standards in Freshman Rhetoric* (University of Illinois, 1956). A motion was made, seconded, and carried to

"advise the NCTE to advertise for sale and make available these two pamphlets."

10. It was moved, seconded, and carried that James I. Brown, University of Minnesota, be invited to serve as liaison officer between CCCC and NSSC after the May issue of CCC.

11. Erwin Steinberg reported the present use of a pamphlet giving instructions for program participants and requested that his committee, which includes Francis Shoemaker and Robert Tuttle, be allowed to study the results of the present meetings before making recommendations concerning a pamphlet for future use. The postponement was approved.

12. William Sutton reported the completion of the third part of his investigation of personnel and organization of Freshman English courses in Indiana and presented mimeographed copies entitled "Organization of Elements Included in Catalogue Descriptions of Freshman Composition in 1954." The study will be continued during the following year.

14. George Kelly reported the work of his committee (Richard Blakeslee, Eugene Grew, James Walker, Albert Kitzhaber) on the economic basis of Freshman English and distributed copies entitled "A Study of Teaching Conditions in Freshman Composition in 1954" (printed elsewhere in this issue). The study will be continued during the following year.

14. Robert Tuttle reported for his committee (T. A. Barnhart, Richard Beal, Margaret Blickle, Lizette VanGelder) appointed to devise a plan for selecting one representative to the College Section of NCTE and two ex-officio members to the NCTE Board of Directors from CCCC. Adoption of the report was moved, seconded, and carried. (The report is printed elsewhere in this issue.)

15. It was moved, seconded, and carried that there should be no joint session with the College Section of NCTE at the November meeting unless the College Section chairman should call for one.

The meeting adjourned at midnight.

## CCCC Conference, Spring, 1956

### THE ROVING PARTICIPANT

The official record of the 1956 CCCC spring conference at the Hotel Statler (and Washington Square College of New York University) in New York will by custom be presented in the recorders' reports of workshops and panels in the October issue of *College Composition and Communication*. The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee appear in this issue together with the recorder's report of the demonstration of closed-circuit TV prepared by Washington Square College and the luncheon talk given by Lee Deighton. Many panel papers, as given or revised, will be printed in later issues. These reports will record statistics of attendance, names of

participants, and topics discussed in the nineteen workshops, eleven panels, and two general sessions.

Meanwhile, a roving participant can informally testify that this first venture east of Cleveland of midwest-born and nurtured CCCC was an unqualified success. A large proportion of familiar mid-western and even far-western faces appeared among new friends from the New York area. Without doubt the cooperation of the four regional English associations, listed in the Secretary's report, strengthened attendance, and local committees under Francis Shoemaker had announced the meetings far and wide. These regional associations regularly

provide such ample opportunity for discussing the same problems that concern CCCC that out-of-town participants often found they carried away more than they brought.

Hotel accommodations were comfortable. All but one or two meeting rooms lay in a large semicircle about the publishers' exhibits and registration and information headquarters. Only one or two meetings grew beyond the capacity of rooms provided; acoustics were good; room temperatures above rather than below comfort, even through the Executive Committee's midnight session. The coffee breaks proved so popular that they are likely to become an institution whenever finances and local facilities permit. Even bellboys and maids were courteously tolerant of guests who tipped lightly if at all, who brought little glamor, and gave substance for almost no gossip.

Friday night was free, as promised, of any but privately arranged professional meetings. Assisted then as at many other times by Mrs. Nutley and her helpers on the Hospitality Committee, members fanned out to theatres, restaurants, and reunions with New York friends. Partly because of the season and the weather, theatre-goers discovered that chance request at the box office produced better results than advance reservation.

All guests at the luncheon found at their places a surprise packet of paperback books, which they swapped about the table until everyone had what he most wanted, and copies of the *CEA Critic*, the *Reader's Digest*, and the *Exercise Exchange*. Centerpieces were a collection of small United Nations flags, also souvenirs. Ceremonies from the head table were pleasant, informal, and brief, and the very well-received talk by Lee Deighton closed as scheduled in time for matinees or early departures.

Yet CCCC was, as usual, a hard-working organization. Only one or two work-

shops failed to attract enough participants. Wherever the roving participant stopped, discussion was proceeding vigorously forward. Only one or two could be described as desultory, at least one comprised forty or so experienced administrators, in several talk was spirited and in one briefly violent. It is too early to assess the experiment of planning one group of workshops in two completed sessions of two meetings each to permit participants to attend discussions of two topics, but in one such workshop, at the close of the first two meetings, two-thirds of the original participants found the topic and discussion so interesting that they elected to remain.

At each successive CCCC conference, diversified as the workshop topics are, one subject seems to dominate discussion and to permeate sessions where it would seem to be extraneous. Levels of usage and the conventional handbooks, general semantics, articulation with the high school, training of the composition teacher have been such pervasive problems.

The 1956 conference developed two-structural linguistics and how to teach the rapidly increasing numbers of students. Meetings where structural linguistics was the main concern were large and vocal, but the subject cropped up in apparently unrelated discussions. CCCC members are obviously eager to learn the present state of research, to be shown its applicability to practical teaching, and to assess those applications. The second topic drew large attendance to hear Harold Whitehall testify to teaching over public TV, to witness the demonstration of closed-circuit TV arranged by Thomas Clark Pollock and Oscar Cargill, and to take part in the panel exploring solutions to large classes. Since discussion on neither subject was definitive, one may expect that CCCC committees will be at work on them throughout the year, that



authors will feel impelled to communicate on them in CCC, and that workshops

and panels on them will appear at Chicago in 1957.

## CCCC Bulletin Board

The National Council has agreed to participate in the program of the American Heritage Foundation to get out the vote in 1956. Readers of the Council journals will themselves need little prodding to vote, but they could well launch a private campaign to get friends and neighbors to the polls. The year 1956 is more than usually critical in international, national, and educational affairs.

Secretary Gladys Brown reports that the CCCC Placement Service had a busy three days at the March meeting in New York City. Many conferences were arranged between instructors and professors seeking advancement and those seeking to recruit faculty members for numerous colleges and universities. There is no way of knowing how many contracts were made but judging from the general expressions of satisfaction the conferences must have been satisfactory. It was noticeable that there were several young June candidates for doctorates among the group of the would-be employed.

Mrs. Brown also requests attention to the following correction of Item 5, Secretary's Report No. 15, CCC, February, 1956: "Since the printing of the Minutes constituting the Secretary's Report No. 15, Willis C. Jackman has agreed to act as Local Chairman for the spring CCCC conference, 1957, at Chicago. The Hotel Morrison has been confirmed as headquarters for the conference."

It is important that as a member of the CCCC you see that your name and

address appear on the annual roll of members which will be taken soon after the NCTE Convention in November and mailed to the CCCC Chairman about January first. Since the fiscal year begins August 1, there is ample time for annual dues to be paid before the roll is made up. If members choose to pay their dues for both NCTE and CCCC in the spring, there is no worry about having paid in time for names to be on the annual membership lists.

In accordance with the constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Board of Directors at its meeting last Thanksgiving Day chose Helen Olson, Helene Hartley, Oscar Haugh, James Mason, and Fannie J. Ragland as a Nominating Committee to propose officers for 1957. Through Helen Olson, the chairman, the committee offers these nominations:

For President: Helen K. Mackintosh,  
U. S. Office of Education

For First Vice-President: Brice Harris,  
Pennsylvania State University

For Second Vice-President: Harold B. Allen, University of Minnesota

For Directors-at-Large: G. Robert Carlsen, University of Texas; Mrs. Florence Rayfield, Irondale Junior High School; Nathan P. Tillman, Atlanta University; Marian Walsh, Louisville Public Schools; Lorna Virginia Welch, Southwest High School; Miriam Wilt, Temple University.

This slate will be presented for action at the meeting of the Board next November. Other nomination(s) may be made

by petition(s) signed by twenty Directors of the Council and presented to the Secretary of the Council, with the written consent of the nominee(s), before August 16. When Miss Olson moves the election of the committee's nominees, other nominations may be made by members of the Board.

During the November meetings of the National Council in New York a new Committee on International Cooperation was launched, with Strang Lawson as chairman. Other members are Nick Aaron Ford, Morgan State College (Baltimore); Mary Elizabeth Fowler, Teachers College of Connecticut; Hans Gottschalk, New York State Teachers College (Geneseo); R. C. Simonini, Longwood College; Lorna V. Welch, Kansas City Public Schools.

Without duplicating the work of the Committee on Teaching English as a Second Language, Mr. Lawson's committee will explore ways of establishing and maintaining contact between the National Council and persons teaching English language and literature in for-

eign countries to the end of mutual enlightenment and support. Means discussed at the first meeting were to prepare a roster of such teachers, to see that they learn of new texts and procedures used here and that we learn of theirs, to establish contact with UNESCO and American agencies acting to strengthen international cultural contacts, to arrange panels at an early Council meeting of American teachers of English who have taught abroad and of foreign teachers who are visiting or teaching in the United States. In this committee the National Council takes on an international scope.

Jean Malmstrom's contributions as CCCC-NSC liaison officer end with this issue, though it is hoped that from time to time she will be found in CCC as author of contributed articles. For CCCC she pioneered in the very important function of keeping the two complementary organizations officially informed of one another's existence and activities. Although the name of her successor cannot yet be announced, it is expected that he will assume the office in time to prepare NSSC News for the October issue.

## Proposed Revisions of the CCCC Constitution

As required in the CCCC Constitution, Article IX, Section 1, and By-Laws 7 A, the Secretary Gladys K. Brown presents the following proposed amendments to the constitution and by-laws. During the summer members will have an opportunity to vote on them by mail preparatory to formal acceptance of the results at the meeting of the Executive Committee in November.

The amendments constitute the report, accepted by the CCCC Executive Committee in regular session on March 22, 1956, of the committee, Robert Tuttle chairman, appointed to work out a plan

for the selection of the four representatives from the CCCC to the National Council. The latest form of the constitution to which these are proposed amendments can be seen in *College Composition and Communication*, December, 1955, or in CCCC Facts sent out from the NCTE office, 704 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois.

The proposed amendments are as follows:

To add to Article IV the following Sections 5 and 6:

*Section 5. Member of NCTE College Section Committee*

a. As authorized by the National Council of Teachers of English, the CCCC shall elect one of its members to serve on the College Section Committee of the NCTE.

b. This member shall serve for a term of three years.

c. The term of this member shall regularly begin thirty days after the announcement of election, which announcement shall be made at the annual business meeting held during the annual convention of the NCTE next following his election.

d. The member shall be elected from the past or retiring members of the Executive Committee, or from the past chairmen of the CCCC.

e. Nomination, election, and filling of vacancies shall be as specified in Article VII.

f. The member shall be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.

g. The duties of this member shall be those set forth in the By-Laws.

#### *Section 6. Ex-Officio Members of the NCTE Board of Directors*

a. As authorized by the National Council of Teachers of English, the CCCC shall elect three of its members to serve as ex-officio members of the NCTE Board of Directors.

b. These members shall serve for a term of three years. However, at the first general election to office following adoption of this clause, one member shall be elected for one year only, one for two, and the third for a full three-year term.

c. The term of office shall regularly begin thirty days after the announcement of election, which announcement shall be made at the annual business meeting to be held during the annual convention of the NCTE next following his election.

d. The members shall be elected at

large from the membership of the CCCC.

e. Nomination, election, and filling of vacancies shall be as specified in Article VII.

f. The members shall be ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

g. The duties of these members shall be those set forth in the By-Laws.

#### ARTICLE VII

##### *Section 1.*

Amend by inserting after words "Executive Committee" the following: ", or CCCC member of the NCTE College Section, or CCCC ex-officio member of the NCTE Board of Directors."

##### *Section 2.*

Amend present letters "c," "d," to read "d," "e" respectively.

Add a new clause "c" to read, "Nominate not more than three candidates for the retiring CCCC member of the NCTE College Section Committee, and not more than three candidates for the retiring CCCC member ex-officio of the NCTE Board of Directors."

##### *Section 3.*

Add after the word "Committee," the following: ", the NCTE College Section Committee, and the NCTE Board of Directors."

##### *Section 6.*

Add after the words "Executive Committee" the following: ", or in the positions of CCCC member of the NCTE College Section Committee or CCCC ex-officio members of the NCTE Board of Directors."

#### BYLAWS

Amend "5," "6," and "7," to "7," "8," and "9."

Add a new item "5" to read: "5. Duties of the CCCC member of the NCTE College Section Committee.

"A. The CCCC member of the NCTE College Section Committee shall perform the regular duties of a member of that committee.

"B. The member shall act as liaison between that committee and the Executive Committee, reporting to the latter on all matters of concern to it, and seeking its advice when such advice is needed."

Add a new item "6" to read: "6. Duties of the CCCC Ex-Officio Members of the NCTE Board of Directors.

"A. The CCCC ex-officio members of the NCTE Board of Directors shall perform the regular duties of ex-officio members of that Board.

"B. These members shall act as liaison between that Board and the Executive Committee, reporting to the latter on all matters of concern to it, and seeking its advice when such advice is needed."

## Some of the Year's Work in College Composition and Communication

Charles W. Roberts, Director of Freshman Rhetoric, University of Illinois, reports that the announcement in December, 1955, that the University would discontinue Rhetoric 100 (sub-freshman English) beginning in the fall semester, 1960 (reported in *College Composition and Communication*, February, 1956), whipped up such furious activity in educational circles in Illinois that he dare not turn aside to write the account announced for this issue. When the dust settles, we shall hear from him. Meanwhile, an interim article by his assistant Harris Wilson appears in this issue. Mr. Wilson briefly describes the attractive, 18-page pamphlet entitled *Standards in Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois*, which might well be on the shelf in every Freshman English staff room.

While the University of Illinois appears to have established the fact that quality of high-school teaching English has declined in the last decade, Benjamin Fine, in the *New York Times* for March 18, 1956, summarizes a national survey which indicates that nationally instruction has improved in the same period.

The study was made by Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom, Department of Education, University of Chicago, and examiner for the

office of Armed Forces Information and Education of the United States Department of Defense. The tests, the General Educational Development tests used in the armed services to learn whether a person has the equivalent of a high-school education, were given a trial run in 1943 on 35,000 seniors in 814 schools in all states. For comparison the same battery was given in 1955 to 39,000 seniors in 814 schools (apparently not the same schools) in all states. Areas tested were English, social sciences, natural sciences, literary matters, mathematics.

Largest improvement—8%—appeared in mathematics, the least in social sciences. "Considerable improvement" was shown in English. General improvement was five points on a scale of 100.

General variation from state to state was wide—30% spread between the best state and the worst. For example, Mr. Fine reports, "if students were admitted to college only if they ranked in the upper half of the national score in English, 65 per cent of the students in the best state would be admitted, and only 35 per cent in the worst. The study does not name the states.

"Engineers Need Not Be Writers" is the contention of John Mitchell, Univer-



sity of Massachusetts, in the *CEA Critic* for February, 1956. Since little success can be demonstrated—in proportion to the investment of time, money, and energy—in developing skill in writing in students of science and engineering, Mr. Mitchell proposes that we stop trying. In place of the report-writing courses wedged into tight and uncongenial science curriculums, and report-writing in on-the-job training programs, he would leave engineer-scientists in their laboratories, where they are skilled and efficient, and place trained writers at the typewriters. Such science writers would be trained in the liberal arts with a large proportion of courses in scientific method, history of science, philosophy, mathematics, symbolic logic, and psychology—and of course literature and composition. Such science writers already function effectively in newspapers, magazines, and the Civil Service.

A Research Note in the *Journal of Communication*, Spring, 1956, page 44, presents what reads like sound advice on appointment and conduct of committees. The article digested is by Robert F. Bales, "In Conference," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 1954, pp. 44-50.

Bales believes that maximum effective size is seven unless a greater number of relevant points of view must be represented and that small committees of two or three are to be avoided "if the power problem between members is likely to be critical." Best members are moderate participators, for "high participators" compete and "low participators" contribute too few ideas. There should be two leaders, not one—a driver, and a balance wheel. Action begins safest with facts—what are they, how does the committee feel about them, what should be done? If disagreements threaten to block progress, "solicit opinions and experiences of others" and thus discover that those in

disagreement aren't talking about the same thing. Effective conduct in the committee calls for attentive listening with active indication of reactions, addressing all members, anticipating an argument and avoiding it by return to facts and direct experiences, and close attention to the developing interrelationship among members as committee work advances.

In the Winter, 1956, issue of *Improving College and University Teaching* (Oregon State College, Corvallis, quarterly, \$2 a year) Luella Cole, author of *The Background for College Teaching*, offers four practical suggestions for examinations. Her first, an alternative to the announced period-long test with its irritating make-ups, is a series of brief pop quizzes—not solely on the work for the day—with no make-ups. Both spotty and constant attenders are promised that at the end of the term their lowest grade will be discarded. For large classes where objective tests are virtually unavoidable, Miss Cole proposes a choice of 12 or so from about 25 questions, each answer to be restricted to three sentences. The third is an hour's essay test. For twenty minutes after receiving the question the student plans his answer on scratch paper. Then he is given the bluebook in which he writes his essay. For small advanced classes Miss Cole recommends individually tailored long-essay questions adjusted to the student's known interests and aptitudes and perhaps to other courses he is taking. After cards bearing the questions are distributed, the student may write his essay anywhere he likes, in his room or in the library. All four suggestions include ingenious variations on conventional procedure.

A modification of the Junior English Testing program at Duke University is reported by Robert M. Colver and Henry

Weitz of the Duke Bureau of Testing and Guidance in the *South Atlantic Bulletin*, November, 1955, p. 11. As introduced in 1948 (described in the *South Atlantic Bulletin*, March, 1949) the program required *all* juniors to pass a one-hour objective test and a two-hour essay. The only change from 1948 to 1953 was the substitution for a local objective test of the Mechanics of Expression and Effectiveness of Expression sections of the Cooperative English Test, also used for freshman placement.

As a result of studies of the records of juniors who failed the test from 1950 to 1953 it was discovered that the same individuals would have been identified if all juniors who as freshmen had been exempted from one semester of required composition and all others who in the two required semesters earned C and B or better were excused from the Junior Test. This change, effective in 1954 and 1955, reduced the numbers being tested—and thus the cost—nearly half and also reduced student discontent with the requirement. Admittedly there has been an immeasurable loss of incentive to maintain standards of competence on the part of students who after their freshman year know that they will be excused from the Junior Test.

"Sincerel Yours': Some Gentle Counsel to Those Writing Letters of Application" by J. Hal Connor and George P. Clark, in the *AAUP Bulletin*, Winter, 1955, pp. 669-676, will be read and filed by all instructors obliged to teach letter-writing and could profitably be reprinted and handed to seniors—and graduate

students in English!—just before they set to composing what could be for them a decisive document. The authors, both of Northern Illinois State Teachers College, classify and illustrate the most glaring faults in letters sent to their college in application for *teaching* positions there. In addition to damaging errors of grammar, syntax, and spelling—one of which forms the title—their categories are Gentle Condescension, Ingenuousness, Aggressive Self-Confidence and Self Commendation, the Direct Mail Approach, and Educating the Employer. The examples are painful enough, but the authors' sympathetic tone suggests that they write under the benign influence of Max Beerbohm's "How Shall I Word It?"

The February, 1956, issue of the University of Kansas *Bulletin of Education*, Oscar M. Haugh, Editor, contains a full report of discussion in six workshops held during the University of Kansas third annual Conference on Composition and Literature in High School and College, October, 1955. Subjects of the workshops were Speaking and Writing in the Same Course, How Much and What Kind of Grammar, Teaching Poetry, What Students Write About, Reading Literature, and the Superior Student.

In the issue also is the text of an address given at this conference by Kenneth E. Anderson, Dean of the School of Education, proposing and defending the requirement of four years of English in high school. Free copies are offered by Mr. Haugh to anyone who writes him at 209 Bailey, University of Kansas, Lawrence.



